

Mo Dao Zu Shi: The Musical

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Collections:	Ashes' Library , Watch/Read The Series , Characters Watch/Read Canon/Fanon , Alternative Universes of Fandoms I enjoy. , Books Read - Not Completed (GMODC) , Characters Explores Fandom , DiaKatsuki's Faves , mxtx ✨🍵 tea 🍵✨ that is so so fine , Reacting to Canon , Reaction fics , Fanfics Wangxian1 , mdzs reaction fics , Absolute MDZS Favorites/Rereads ❤️🔥❤️🔥❤️🔥 , Novel's List of Books to Read , ❤️🔥 My Therapy 🦋🌌 , Gives me the feels (I cried)
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by [Loveable_Psychopath](#)

Summary

14 years of peace and solace greets the main gentry sects after the truth of Jin GuangYao. Marriages happen, sects prosper, children and new heirs are born, relationships are mended. Its peace and its all great.

Until everything shatters.

Tormented by the broken Wei WuXian...Jiang Cheng, Lan Qiren, and the four juniors try to find a way to fix things and get Wei WuXian a happy ending. Stumbling upon his notes of time travel and the theory of being able to go back and change everything, they take the chance.

Things do not go very smoothly, especially when they realize that when showing the future to their past selves, its shown in songs.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Prologue

“Grandmaster Lan, Jiujiu...are you sure about this?”

Jiang Cheng inhaled shakily, starting at the complicated array on the ground. Lan Qiren and himself had taken his nephews, Jin Ling and Lan SiZhui, along with their two sworn brothers, Lan JingYi and Ouyang Zizhen to the back hill of Cloud Recesses.

It had taken months of planning from all of them, Jiang Cheng only realizing they were truly doing this as he stood now. Turning, Lan Qiren looked towards his nephew's son.

Lan SiZhui had a far away look in his red rimmed eyes. Lan SiZhui had used to bore a tranquil expression and was an elegant boy who sent waves of serenity out. He was dignified and well trained, no expectation as he had been raised by Lan WangJi.

‘Lan WangJi...’

Lan Qiren repeated the name in his head of his late nephew. He closed his eyes recalling the fateful day the happiness gained after Jin Guangyao's death had been shattered. Jiang Cheng also was reminded about the day. How could he not remember it? So much tragedy...but the worst had to be his brother, Wei WuXian, finally losing his smile.

1 year and 8 Months Earlier:

Wei WuXian smiled brightly at his husband as they flew to Koi Tower. They were arriving to the sect under multiple influences. One, it was Jin Ling's request to see his uncles and cousin. Secondly, Jiang Cheng's daughter, Jiang LiMei (named by Madam Jiang, Jiang MingZhu, in honor of her late sister in law), hadn't met Wei WuXian in almost a year.

Wei WuXian was thrilled with a family get together after so long, even though he knew it was also serving as a discussion conference. That was why they were arriving a day early. Flying with them were a few disciples of the GusuLan sect including Lan SiZhui and Lan JingYi, and Lan Xichen and Lan Qiren. Lan Xichen's wife was staying back at the GusuLan Sect since she was pregnant with the Lan Sect Leaders second child. The heir to the sect, Lan

ShaoQiang was also staying back due to his own studies (and punishment he had gotten while playing around).

“Lan Zhan, look! They’re over there outside the Fragrance Hall!” Wei WuXian pointed down and Lan WangJi smiled, nodding.

They flew down, the group on the ground consisting of Jin Ling, Ouyang Zizhen, Jiang Cheng, Jiang MingZhu, and Jiang LiMei. Jiang LiMei, who was about seven years old, beamed when she caught sight of the black robes, squealing, “Uncle Wei!!”

Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian stepped down first, the older releasing his husband who went running to the young female, “Little Lotus!!”

Jiang MingZhu laughed joyfully, releasing her daughter’s hand and letting the two meet. Wei WuXian quickly carried his niece, pinching her cheeks, “My little Lotus, did you miss me?”

Jiang LiMei nodded enthusiastically and saw Lan SiZhui, “Tang-Xiong!”

“A-Mei!” Lan SiZhui stood by his Father, Lan JingYi running with him, “You’ve grown even more beautiful!”

Jiang LiMei giggled, motioning to Lan WangJi to carry her. Lan WangJi smiled, easily taking the child from his husband and the group meeting together. Jin Ling greeted, “DaiJiu, Uncle Lan, SiZhui, JingYi, Zewu Jun, Master Lan,”

Wei WuXian clicked his tongue, looking over his nephew, “Look at you, almost Jiang Cheng’s height!”

“DaiJiu,” Jin Ling whined, “I’ve been this height for ages and the only reason JiuJiu is taller is because he’s got platforms on!”

Wei WuXian laughed loudly, ignoring his brother's fuming glare towards the Jin Sect Leader, "Right, right, you're an adult. Aye, speaking of. When are you four going to get married, huh?"

The four sworn brothers all flamed red. Lan JingYi complained, "Senior Wei!!"

"Baba," Lan SiZhui looked at Lan WangJi pleadingly, "Please reason with A-Die. We have a lot of time to marry, just look at ShuShu!"

Jiang Cheng whacked Lan SiZhui on the head lightly, "You brat! What has my shixiong taught you, huh? Hanguang Jun, you better drill back those manners. SiZhui turning into ShiXiong,"

Lan WangJi nodded and agreed, "We already have JingYi and Wei Ying. A-Yuan, give your uncle some face,"

Lan SiZhui giggled, ignoring the offended squawks from Lan JingYi and Wei WuXian.

"Da Bai Zi, " Jiang MingZhu greeted her brother in law, taking her daughter from Lan WangJi, Wei WuXian smiled brightly at her, "Di Mei, is Jiang Cheng treating you well?"

"You-" Jiang Cheng was about to hit him playfully, but paused when he saw the disapproving look Lan Qiren was giving his brother.

Jiang MingZhu giggled at their antics, "A-Cheng treats me very well, Wei Ying,"

"Good, " Wei WuXian smirked, "Though I still wonder how the two of you married without a love potion-"

Jiang Cheng glared, "You, shut up!"

Lan Xichen laughed, “A-Ying, play nice. We don't want Sect Leader Jiang to lose his mind before the conference,”

“Of course, Da Bai Zi, ” Wei WuXian grinned and then faded as he saw the glare he received from his uncle in law, turning his head and smiling at Ouyang Zizhen, “Is your father here?”

“Of course not, ” Ouyang Zizhen laughed, “I took over the sect two years ago, remember Senior Wei?”

“Ah, yes! I forgot, ” Wei WuXian shrugged.

“Biao Ge!” Jiang LiMei called Jin Ling.

“Yes, A-Mei?” Jin Ling answered easily.

“Food time?”

Jin Ling nodded and turned back to a few Lanling Jin disciples, “Lead the GuauLan disciples to any rooms they need for their stay and provide them with lunch. Everyone here can come with me into the Main hall,”

The two nodded, bowing and turning away. Lan Xichen nodded to his sect, who all smiled and bowed, following away towards the guest quarters. Jin Ling turned around leading the way into the Fragrance Hall. There were already tables set up, Jin Ling walking straight up to the center seat and sitting down with a soft flick of his golden robes. He motioned for everyone to sit down, Lan Qiren saluting the Sect Leader, “Sect Leader Jin is truly well taught,”

Jin Ling only bowed his head out of pure respect when in reality he was not a big fan of Lan Qiren. His cousin and sworn brother served as his and Ouyang Zizhen’s messenger birds on

how Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi's lives were. It had been years since Jin Guangyao and they all were long past juniors, Ouyang Zizhen and Jin Ling both being well known sect leaders, the OuyangBailing Sect prospering in a way past sect leaders had been unable to do so. It was a huge sect, almost that of a great sect. All the old sect leaders had married and heirs were already born, including Nie Huaisang and his two sons. And while life was prospering and happiness was flowing around, there was still once knick. Wei WuXian, his wonderful DaiJiu, had left behind the tainted reputation of the past and gained a new one as both Lan WangJi's husband and a powerful inventor / genius. The only problem was Lan Qiren, who still didn't approve of the marriage between his nephew and Wei WuXian.

It was reasonable at the beginning, but it had been so long that it was just ridiculous. Jin Ling really didn't understand the huge dislike and one day had finally asked Jiang Cheng about it. Jiang Cheng had explained vaguely about Lan Qiren, who had apparently disliked Wei WuXian the moment they met due to Wei WuXian being the son of CangSe Sanren. He then added saying things that Lan Qiren also blamed Wei WuXian for Lan WangJi's change from the perfect ice statue into a real human, and a severe punishment Lan WangJi had endured for saving Wei WuXian after the Bloodbath of Nightless City.

Jin Ling didn't know what that punishment was and he knew better than to ask Wei WuXian or Lan WangJi about it. So he kept the information for himself (minus his cousin and sworn brothers). Shaking clear of his thoughts, Jin Ling nodded to a female servant, who bowed and the servants all began to place dishes and drinks (tea and wine) in front of everyone.

"What liquor is this, A-Ling?" Wei WuXian asked.

"Drink and guess," Jin Ling taunted, picking up his chopsticks.

"It's good liquor, that's what!" Jiang Cheng announced after taking a sip.

Wei WuXian drowned a sip and hummed in approval, "A-Ling, you've been drinking well and have good taste!"

Jin Ling laughed, the sound fading as Jiang LiMei looked at her Mother, "Can I try liquor?"

“No!” Everyone in the room quickly exclaimed.

Jiang LiMei was the only daughter of the family and was naturally overprotected and pampered by all of them. Even Lan Qiren couldn't help but have a soft spot for the young female. Jiang LiMei pouted, “But-”

“A-Mei,” Jiang MingZhu scolded.

Jiang LiMei huffed and pouted. Lan SiZhui stood up and took a teapot with him. He poured a small cup for her, “Here you go, you can have this instead. See, everyone in white robes is drinking it,”

Jiang LiMei saw and nodded, smiling again. Lan SiZhui smiled, returning to his seat. Ouyang Zizhen then noticed something off, speaking up, “Ah? Senior Wei, no extra chili oil?”

The atmosphere suddenly changed. Lan WangJi's eyes darkened in displeasure, while Wei WuXian paused eating, looking awkward. Lan Xichen sighed, glancing between Lan Qiren and Lan WangJi. Lan SiZhui and Lan JingYi shifted uncomfortably, keeping their eyes on Lan WangJi who gave Lan Qiren a glare. Lan Qiren glared right back, “What are you glaring at me for?”

Wei WuXian gripped Lan WangJi's hand quickly before he could say anything, “Lan Zhan,”

Lan WangJi inhaled and exhaled, ordering, “Bring chili oil,”

“WangJi-”

“What?” Lan WangJi looked calmly at his brother, “We're not in Cloud Recesses, let alone Gusu. Why should he have to be denied eating the way he wants?”

“Lan Zhan, not now!” Wei WuXian exclaimed, but Jiang Cheng narrowed his eyes.

“Eating the way he wants, what is this about?” Jiang Cheng demanded, looking straight at Lan Qiren.

“My dear,” Jiang MingZhu whispered calmly, “The children are still here,”

Wei WuXian also looked at Lan WangJi nodding with his sister in law’s words, “Lan Zhan, let’s just eat. It’s such a nice day and occasion, must we argue?”

After seeing Lan WangJi and Lan Qiren not break the stare, Wei WuXian clicked his tongue distressed. Jiang Cheng had turned away, but was paying attention to the ordeal. Jiang LiMei was young, but she had long figured out that something serious was being spoken about and from the way her older cousins were all eating with their heads down and shy glances, she also remained silent. Wei WuXian and Lan Xichen shared worried looks, the younger tugging his husbands sleeve, “Baobei, please. For me?”

Lan WangJi glanced at his husband, eyes softening at the name, and nodded, “Mn, for you,”

Wei WuXian smiled, turning back to the food and giving Jin Ling a pleading look. Jin Ling cleared his throat and spoke of the first thing that came to mind, “Lanling’s been having some trouble with spirits,”

Everyone looked at him surprised. Lan JingYi frowned, “You mean as in a sect under Lanling...not the city, right?”

“No, I mean the city,” Jin Ling sighed, “It’s been giving me a headache and I’ve been spending so much time trying to figure it out,”

“Is it serious?” Jiang MingZhu asked, looking at Jiang LiMei worriedly.

“Considering it showed up three days ago, I’m uncertain. That’s why I asked you to bring disciples with you. JiuMa, tomorrow, please do not take A-Mei anywhere alone and have disciples with you,” Jin Ling spoke with utmost sincerity.

Jiang MingZhu nodded firmly. She had amazing cultivation, but Jiang LiMei was young and would be safer with multiple cultivators around her. Also, Jiang Cheng was very protective of his daughter and wife. Jiang Cheng looked at his nephew with a serious face, “How bad is it?”

Jin Ling hesitated, before sighing, “The Elders think they’re not normal spirits. They’ve been causing mayhem and a couple of deaths. At first it was just chaos on the outside of the city, last week and it wasn’t taken seriously since no one reported it. But then three days ago two people died. The disciples that came in contact with it were injured heavily. The most concerning part was the path we realized the spirit is taking,”

“Where’s it going?” Lan SiZhui frowned.

Jin Ling stayed silent, pausing and gulping. Lan Xichen understood and said surprised, “It’s heading to Koi Tower?”

Jin Ling looked guilty now and he hung his head. Wei WuXian softened his face, “A-Ling, you couldn’t cancel the discussion conference so suddenly. Do not take it to heart,”

“And what if someone gets hurt?” Jin Ling demanded sharply.

“Biao Ge, don’t be mad,” Jiang LiMei scolded cutely.

Jiang MingZhu smiled softly at her nephew and looked at her and her daughters empty plate. She stood up, picking up Jiang LiMei and bowing, “I’ll take her and go to our room. I need a nap and A-Mei can read some of her books,”

Everyone nodded, Jiang LiMei waving goodbye. Jiang Cheng smiled farewell, watching as his family left the hall. When the doors shut, Lan WangJi spoke sternly, “No one will get hurt, what do you know about the spirit?”

“That’s just the problem! I know nothing!” Jin Ling sighed, “The only way I know its a spirit is because the people who died all were killed by their heart being torn and gaining a huge hole, but no external wound or blood occurred,”

Wei WuXian’s eyes flew wide, “That’s...how malicious,”

“Do you know what it is?” Lan Qiren asked without hesitating.

“Why would I know?” Wei WuXian frowned confused.

Lan Qiren’s eyebrow twitched and Wei WuXian understood, “Oh, because I’m a demonic cultivator?”

“No one knows cruel and bloody better,” Lan Qiren nodded tightly.

Lan WangJi glared at his uncle fiercely, “Uncle, watch it,”

“Am I wrong?” Lan Qiren argued, “You married him fully aware of his powers, his knowledge, his secrets, his everything. So am I wrong when I think he would know the answer of something vile when he is practically breathing resentment?”

Everyone sighed mentally, long used to the arguments between Lan WangJi and Lan Qiren, Wei WuXian and Lan Xichen trying to defuse both sides. However right now, Wei WuXian couldn’t help but clench his jaw irritated, “Master Lan, just because I’ve used it for more years than LiMei has lived, doesn’t mean I know of every creature and critter vile or not,”

“Well then, that’s all that needs to be said. Why argue about something unworthy of arguing about then?” Lan Qiren scoffed.

The snide was caught by everyone, Wei WuXian quickly lowering his gaze to the floor. Lan WangJi’s eyes flared and he yelled, “Uncle!!”

Jiang Cheng signalled to the four juniors, who all rose with him. Jiang Cheng cleared his throat, “ShiXiong, why don’t we go look at the reports?”

Wei WuXian looked doubtful, but Lan Xichen smiled and nodded, “Yes, A-Ying, go ahead,”

Wei WuXian stood up and left the hall with his brother and the juniors. The servants had long since rushed out, Lan WangJi and Lan Qiren glaring at one another. Lan Xichen stood up when his brother did in anger, “WangJi, Uncle didn’t mean it,”

“Yes he did,” Lan WangJi seethed, storming forward towards his Uncle, who stood up calmly and met him in the center.

Lan Xichen held both of them slightly away from one another, “Uncle, tell WangJi you didn’t mean-”

“He’ll never admit that!” Lan WangJi snapped, “He’s clouded in the mind, always has been,”

“You-” Lan Qiren grew angry, “Look at you! Talking back and disrespecting your elders. I warned you when you wanted to marry him he’d be a terrible influence! He’s undisciplined, unruly, unteachable, and you defend him over and over aga-”

“Are you going to punish me for it?” Lan WangJi stopped him, ignoring Lan Xichen’s warning hiss.

Lan Qiren halted and laughed, “Punish you? Haven’t you been punished for the brat enough?!”

“That brat is my husband,” Lan WangJi almost growled.

“He’s married to you and yet you let him prance around as if he’s not married into the GusuLan Sect. Wearing black and red, running, drinking, playing around, loud noises. You’ve completely deformed the entire sect for him!” Lan Qiren yelled, “WangJi, how many times must I remind you that you have to discipline him!”

“Discipline him?!” Lan WangJi repeated in disbelief, “And what discipline would that be?”

“He’s done many things he needs to be reprimanded for,”

“And is living with guilt and knowing he was framed, knowing that Jiang Yanli died as collateral damage, not enough!?” Lan WangJi raised his voice slightly.

“WangJi, Uncle, please!” Lan Xichen tried.

Lan Qiren shook his head and spat, “We all suffer from that, its not just him,”

“He died!!!” Lan WangJi exclaimed.

“And yet it seemed you paid for it more!”

Lan WangJi looked tired of this argument, “Brother, reason with Uncle, won’t you? He’ll listen to you,”

“WangJi, one day, you’ll see I’m right!!” Lan Qiren seethed before Lan Xichen could speak.

Lan WangJi turned back and shook his head, “No. One day, you’re going to realize that you have broken more rules than he ever has. That you have caused him more harm than he has you,”

“Harmed him?” Lan Qiren laughed mockingly, “I’ve been trying to teach him,”

Lan WangJi frowned, “Forcing him to become used to Gusu food when’s from Yunmeng? Having his levels of resentment be checked daily to make sure he isn’t using demonic cultivation too much? Not giving him a forehead ribbon after marriage? Not letting him change his surname, and then insulting him when he said he wasn’t going to anyway? Keeping most of the disciples away from him? Is this teaching him or trapping him?”

Lan Qiren looked at his nephews, “The last one is context based. The others are done with his cultivation in mind and the reputation of WangJi and the sect,”

Lan WangJi couldn’t keep it in and angry, frustrated, tears formed in his eyes as he glared at his uncle, “When you realize your mistakes Uncle, what is it going to cost you?”

Lan Qiren looked at him confused and surprised, but Lan WangJi left the room in haste. Lan Xichen looked at his Uncle with a distressed expression, “Please go and rest Uncle,”

He then chased after his brother, “WangJi!”

Lan WangJi shoved his brothers arm away, turning to him angrily, “Why do you keep defending him and stopping me?”

“WangJi,” Lan Xichen sighed sadly, “You know I’m on your side with this, but Uncle is stubborn and has always been strict in matters of love due to A-Die and A-Niang,”

“I’m not him,” Lan WangJi stated.

“But to him your marriage has been a mixture of both of them,” Lan Xichen frowned, “You attacked 33 elders for A-Ying, who had just lost control, A-Niang killed Father’s teacher. You were bed ridden and went on a journey for two months, sealed your spiritual energy without hesitation, took him to Gusu to hide when his identity was revealed. A-Die secluded and married A-Niang to protect her. WangJi, you’re not our parents, but Uncle saw his elder brother suffer because of love and he watched you go through the same...”

“Its not the same!” Lan WangJi hissed, “Wei Ying is-”

“WangJi, you know what I mean!” Lan Xichen stopped him.

“No, you can’t justify anything!” Lan WangJi frowned, “Brother, you and uncle still have a good relationship and I know you want Uncle and I to reconcile, but it will never work if Uncle doesn’t treat Wei Ying correctly. Wei Ying has stopped trying to defend himself to Uncle, he accepts it without complaint. As his husband, don’t you think it doesn’t hurt me and enrages me?”

Lan Xichen couldn’t refute there, sighing. He nodded and patted his brother’s shoulder, “Go, check on him,”

Lan WangJi quickly left and found the four juniors in Jin Ling’s study looking over the spirit reports, but Jiang Cheng and Wei WuXian weren’t there. Lan SiZhui saw him first and informed, “ShuShu went to his room to check on ShenShen and A-Mei. A-Die went to your room,”

Lan WangJi nodded, asking a disciples to lead him to the room he and Wei WuXian were using. He walked in without knocking, closing the door behind him. He found Wei WuXian sitting on the edge of the bed, his black outer robes set aside and Chenqing twirling in his fingers. Lan WangJi walked forward, sitting down and brushing some of the hair from his husband’s face, which snapped Wei WuXian out from his daze.

He smiled at Lan WangJi, “You’re back!”

“Mn,” Lan WangJi, pulled Wei WuXian close to him, the younger leaning straight into the white robed cultivator. Lan WangJi stole a quick kiss, “Love you,”

Wei WuXian smiled, “I love you,”

He then let it fade and asked hesitantly, “Did you and Grandmaster Lan argue, again?”

Lan WangJi looked away, face turning into displeasure. Wei WuXian saw it and smiled, “Alright, alright, let’s not talk about it. We haven’t done *everyday is everyday* in for a while due to travel,”

Lan WangJi already felt the teasing stroke on his jaw, giving Wei WuXian a small warning look, “It’s middle of the day,”

Wei WuXian raised an eyebrow casually tugging on the white forehead ribbon, “When has that stopped you before Er-Gege,”

“Wei Ying,” Lan WangJi warned as Wei WuXian’s fingers brushed softly against the edge of his robes, while Wei WuXian pecked his chin.

“Hm?” Wei WuXian teased and then, raised his arms above his head and stretched, “I’m here already,”

Lan WangJi had to force his eyes to not trail about, however the thin material of the red inner robes were not helping. Lan WangJi sucked in a breath, turning his head fully away. Wei WuXian smirked, wrapping his arms around the older, kissing his husband’s ear before saying innocently, “Gege, do you even remember the last time my skin was this fair and free of all your love bites, hm?”

Lan WangJi fisted the bed sheets and warned, “Don’t start something you can’t finish,”

Wei WuXian has been married long enough to know that his lover was never joking with these warnings. Wei WuXian paused for a bit, truly debating if he wanted to go down this route. Making his choice, he reached out gently making Lan WangJi look at him. The older's golden orbs were already slightly darkened and Wei WuXian grinned at him, "Baobei, we've shared nothing more than kisses for three days. Please, let's reward ourselves for being patient,"

"Wei Ying...once I start..." Lan WangJi's hand reached up and undid the red ribbon with a firm pull and Wei WuXian smiled lovingly, "Lan Er Gege, as long as you have a silencing talisman and a locking talisman, do whatever you desire,"

Lan WangJi activated the talisman easily, Wei WuXian giggled at how ready Lan WangJi was. The two quickly locked lips and melted into the sheets and mattress.

The following evening; Discussion conference dinner

The sect leaders and main clan figures that had attended the discussion conference were all eating with soft chatter buzzing around the room. Jiang Cheng and Wei WuXian were talking with one another, laughing and teasing. It was all a warm atmosphere, food and the smell of wine wafting around the room.

But it seemed that it had been too peaceful, because the doors of the hall flew open and a Jin disciple ran forward, "Sect Leader!!!"

Jin Ling sat up at once, "What is it?"

"Two disciples sustained injuries after fighting a spirit!" The disciple informed and Jin Ling shot to his feet alarmed.

"Here? In Koi Tower?"

"Yes! It-"

“I know what it is, sent out drills and spread the word. Keep all the servants inside and make sure any children and their mothers are safe!” Jin Ling ordered, already descending and Suihua unsheathing. The other Sect leaders had stood up as well. Wei WuXian and Jiang Cheng ran to Jin Ling stopping from bursting out. The older spoke seeing Jin Ling’s expression, “Slow down, A-Ling. Everyone in the room needs information before you go swinging,”

Jin Ling huffed but nodded, turning around and quickly summarizing the situation about the spirit. The head Jin disciple who had been in the room spoke up, “Sect Leader, remain in the room. I will handle it, please stay here,”

“But-”

“Sect Leader Jin, please,” The boy said sternly and then left the room.

Jin Ling sighed, nodding, pacing around the center of the room. Nie Huaisang fanned himself worriedly, “Sect Leader Jin, is there a weakness to the ghost?”

“I don’t know! It vanishes in the day, that’s all we’ve confirmed. And one of the group of disciples that fought it learned that while its right hand can pass through our skin, its body is that of a physical being and it can be killed by a stab to a vital area,” Jin Ling rambled.

Ouyang Zizhen and the two Lan juniors rushed forward, all three of them standing around him to comfort him, “That’s good information,”

Lan Wangji unsheathed Bichen along with many other cultivators unsheathing their swords, when the door suddenly rattled and they heard the yells of the head disciple shouting orders. Everyone stood on guard until the doors flew open and three Jin disciples flew into the room landing on the ground coughing. Jin Ling rushed forward, checking them before cursing. He then stormed out of the room, the rest of the cultivators following him. The courtyard was a mess, the disciples of the Jin sect and other sects all either unconscious on the floor, injured, not here due to protection of the defenseless, or were fighting.

“Oh my god,” Lan Sizhui gasped, seeing the spirit.

It was built out of a deep black substance with piercing purple eyes and no pupils. It had no legs, just a torso that swirled with the same magic substance and two arms with talon like ends. Its head had no hair and there was no mouth, but they all could hear the screeches as it flew around and attacked.

“That’s not a spirit,” Wei WuXian suddenly revealed.

“What do you mean?” Someone demanded.

“What is it then?”

“How is that not a-”

“Shut up and let him speak!” Jiang Cheng snapped.

Wei WuXian swallowed, “That’s...that’s not a spirit. I would’ve felt it, but I can’t feel it at all. There’s no resentment or spiritual energy. That’s magic, pure magic. That...is a curse,”

“A curse? Like a Devil’s Curse Marking?” Lan WangJi looked at his husband who nodded.

“Sort of, but I’ve never heard of a curse this malicious...especially at this time. M-maybe a years and years ago, but this...” Wei WuXian looked at Jin Ling, “A-Ling, curses are cast on specific people for different reasons. Has anything happened in the last two weeks, have you done something to make a curse chase you?”

Jin Ling shook his head, “I haven’t left Lanling for a few weeks too busy with reorganizing the archives and training and other stuff,”

“Then who else might have done something?” Lan JingYi asked.

Jin Ling shrugged, "I don't know! In two weeks so many people could come and go! There's nothing in my head that's standing out,"

"Then the sect hasn't done anything," Lan Xichen spoke, voice grave, "Someone's trying to cause trouble,"

"But who?" A sect leader asked, "This curse only came now, meaning its after all of us?"

Wei WuXian hesitated and then suddenly extended his hand. Everyone around him gave his attention. Jiang Cheng froze as he saw the familiar black tendrils. Wei WuXian's eyes turned red and he narrowed his eyes, hardening his gaze on the curse and collecting more resentment in his palm. Frowning, he sent the burst towards the curse, everyone watching as the resentment hit it straight on the upper left arm, but instead of causing pain it went straight into the ghost the screeched. Wei WuXian lifted Chenqing and began to play, but didn't get past ten notes before his body lurched and blood spat from his mouth.

"Wei Ying!" Lan Wangji held him close, "What happened?"

"I..." Wei WuXian was startled, "I tried to control it...I can't,"

"Everybody look out!!" Ouyang Zizhen screamed and everyone scattered as the spirit flew towards them.

That battle was tight, but the curse knew it would lose. Unfortunately, it had a few other abilities. The curse howled and multiple strings of the same black substance it was made of. Multiple smaller curses appeared and began to attack. There were so many that the cultivators all split up, defending themselves and trying to kill them. Wei WuXian and Lan Wangji were staying near one another, trying to protect each other. Wei WuXian had picked up a random sword on the ground seeing as Chenqing was useless here and he didn't want to risk calling any resentment in case it did something worse. Luckily, the golden core in his body that had once been weak had grown quite well over the years and Wei WuXian's swordsmanship had been polished up.

Wei WuXian gasped when seeing a copy sneaking up behind his brother and rushed over slashing at the copy. Lan WangJi watched him from the corner of his eyes, confirming his lover was safe and knew Jiang Cheng could protect both of them with Sandu and Zidian. He fought on his own, looking around and making sure everyone was handling. He saw his son and his sworn brothers all fighting together and sticking close to one another. He saw Lan Xichen protecting Nie Huaisang and making an escape path so the Nie sect leader could go and find Jiang MingZhu and Jiang LiMei to ensure they're alright.

Lan WangJi realized someone was missing and he began to search. He fought and avoided, ducking under and kicking back. He hadn't brought his zither, the same way Wei WuXian hadn't brought Suiban. No one was expecting this big of a threat. Lan WangJi froze when he saw his Uncle surrounded by a few of the copies. Lan WangJi raced over, destroying one of them and helping Lan Qiren fight off the others. Lan Qiren huffed, "I don't need your help, go find Wei WuXian, he doesn't have his sword,"

Lan WangJi blinked confused and after slashing at two copies, "What?"

"Wei WuXian doesn't have his sword and I don't hear a flute," Lan Qiren explained, while fighting "I don't want you to fall into despair if he gets hurt,"

Lan WangJi was about to respond but saw something fly towards his uncle at alarming speeds. He yelled alarmed, shoving Lan Qiren out of the way and yelling, "Uncle!"

Lan WangJi froze and his breathing got caught in his throat. Lan Qiren turned to him, eyes widened and face paling. Lan WangJi choked slightly, staring down where half n' inch of the black talon fingers were in his chest. The talons were connected to the black arm and Lan WangJi looked up to see the curse staring at him with purple eyes gleaming.

"WANGJI!!!" Lan Qiren yelled loudly.

Wei WuXian heard the call and froze, glancing at his brother who also looked alarmed by the fear in Lan Qiren's voice. Wei WuXian began to fight harder and he called out, "Lan Zhan?! Lan Zhan!!"

Lan WangJi stared at the curse and then hardened his gaze. He gripped the wrist, preventing the curse from pulling back. Right now, it was just the ends of the finger, Lan WangJi might have a chance, but...Lan WangJi had another and a better chance to take.

“WangJi, what are you doing?” Lan Qiren demanded, slashing at another copy and trying to get to his nephew.

“Uncle,” Lan WangJi looked at him and gave a pleading smile, “Please-”

“Lan Zhan!!? What are you?!!”

Lan WangJi closed his eyes at hearing his lover. He shook his head, telling his Uncle firmly, “Take care of Wei Ying for me, please protect him, please Uncle,”

Lan Qiren stared at him shocked and then screamed his nephew’s birth name as Lan WangJi walked forward and stabbed Bichen straight into the curse that had been struggling in Lan WangJi’s grip. The arm went right through Lan WangJi’s chest, blood spitting out from the Second Jade’s mouth.

The curse let out a wail of pain and all the copies vibrated before bursting into particles and fading away. The battle began to slow and everyone who saw the jade gasped and froze. Wei WuXian, who had been running and searching, came to a horrified stillness when he saw his husband with an arm pierced into his chest and Bichen pierced through the curse.

Wei WuXian felt tears suddenly well and he screamed, Chenqing falling from his fingers, “LAN ZHAN!”

The curse vibrated and it exploded much like the copies, the black magic fading and the corpse of an aged man fell to the ground. Bichen had been released from the corpse, but it clattered to the ground. Lan WangJi stumbled back, meeting his uncle’s terrified gaze before falling backwards.

Wei WuXian dashed forward, falling to his knees as he caught Lan WangJi and cardeled him. Tears were streaming down his face, “NO NO NO NO!”

Lan WangJi glanced up at him reaching out and placing his hand flat against Wei WuXian’s cheek. Lan WangJi smiled weakly, “Why are you crying, my love? I’ll protect you even if you can’t see me,”

Wei WuXian shook his head, “NO! You can’t- you can’t leave!!!”

Jiang Cheng walked forward slowly, crouching down and placing a hand flat against Wei WuXian’s back as support, staring at Lan WangJi with shock. Lan Xichen had arrived as well, fear in his own eyes, “WangJi...what did you do?”

“Killed a curse,” Lan WangJi answered but choked as blood spilled from his mouth again.

Wei WuXian shook his head desperately, “Lan Zhan! Lan WangJi! Hanguang Jun! You can’t leave me!! What- What am I supposed to do then?”

Lan WangJi wiped away as many tears as he could, keeping one hand against Wei WuXian’s cheek, “Husband...”

“Hu-husband!” Wei WuXian cried, “Please- please! I’ve lost s- so much. I can-can’t lose you too...”

Lan WangJi smiled helplessly about to speak when he heard a heart gutting call. Jiang Cheng and Lan Xichen looked up to see Lan SiZhui and the other three juniors. They had been fighting on the opposite side, but they heard screaming and crying and came here. It didn’t take much for them to realize what had happened when they saw a bloody Bichen, a corpse, and Wei WuXian crying over Lan WangJi. Lan SiZhui’s sword fell from his fingers and he ran forward, collapsing onto his hands and knees, eyes wide and tears just barely kept in, “Baba...B-Baba!”

Lan WangJi moved his hand from Wei WuXian, lowering it and reaching for Lan SiZhui's cheek, "A-Yuan, be good,"

Lan SiZhui broke down, "N-no! No! Please! Baba! Baba!!"

Wei WuXian was shaking violently, "Lan Zhan,"

"I'm here," Lan WangJi said breathlessly, forcing himself to not leave yet, "Wei Ying, don't be sad,"

"You're dying!!!" Wei WuXian yelled at him and he cried weakly, "W-we were h-happy..."

Lan SiZhui shook his head, "There has to be something!!! Anything!!!"

Jin Ling and the other two juniors had walked to stand behind Lan SiZhui their own eyes brimmed with tears. Jin Ling choked, "...Im s-sorry, I didn't-"

"Its not your fault," Lan WangJi coughed, "You didn't know,"

"There had to be something to- to-" Wei WuXian whimpered, "How can you leave me?!?! Lan Zhan!!! Don't leave!! Please, please,"

Lan WangJi smiled painfully, "A-Ying..."

Wei WuXian choked on sobs at the intimate call, "A-Zhan..."

Lan WangJi felt his meridians begin to cool and his eyes felt heavy. He rushed, "Brother, I'm sorry I can't meet your second child,"

Lan Xichen smiled sadly, tears slipping from his eyes, "I'll tell them all about you, I promise,"

Lan Wangji nodded and then glanced between his son and nephew, "Take care of them for me,"

"Always," Lan Xichen nodded, choking a bit at Wei Wuxian whining and Lan Sizhui crying louder beside him. Lan Xichen stroked his brother's head, "You've done so much good, you've been through much as well. Rest peacefully now, didi,"

"Zewu Jun!!!" Wei Wuxian and Lan Sizhui screamed in denial.

Lan Wangji smiled at his brother before he reached out, pulling at Lan Sizhui's sleeve. Lan Sizhui leaned closer, Lan Wangji stroking his head softly, "...I'm so proud of you,"

Lan Sizhui sniffled, "Baba...I love you,"

"I love you," Lan Wangji smiled, "my son,"

Lan Sizhui sobbed loudly. Lan Wangji looked at Wei Wuxian. With his last strength he lifted himself up a bit, Wei Wuxian closing his eyes as they kissed softly. Lan Wangji whispered against his lips, "I love you so much,"

"I love you," Wei Wuxian whispered.

Lan Wangji pulled off his forehead ribbon. He placed it against Wei Wuxian's forehead smiling lovingly, "Perfect,"

Wei WuXian broke down even more. Lan WangJi cupped his face with the hand holding the ribbon and found Lan SiZhui's hand with the other. Lan WangJi felt a tear pass his eye and he gave them softest expression anyone had ever seen, "Thank you,"

Lan WangJi's body stopped fighting, turning limp in Wei WuXian's grip, the golden eyes closing softly. The hand that had been carressing Wei WuXian's cheek fell down, Lan SiZhui's body shaking as he felt the grip of Lan WangJi's hand loosen.

The entire world collapsed around Wei WuXian, everything in his body turning cold. A glass shattering scream ripped from his throat, a wave of spiritual and resentment energy bursting out all through Koi Tower. Jiang Cheng hugged his brother from behind and pressed his forehead against the demonic cultivators back, sending some spiritual energy in to keep his brother from going completely ballistic. Lan Xichen gasped a bit shocked, but hung his head in defeat, biting his lip at the loss of his brother. The three juniors collapsed to their knees, hugging Lan SiZhui who was shaking his head and exclaiming in denial.

Everyone behind them had already frozen and began to sob silently from the scene. Lan Qiren was so in shock that he didn't even register tears streaming. Only when he felt the swarm of resentment energy did he snapback.

Everyone looked at Wei WuXian, his broken eyes swirling red with faint black tendrils beginning to filter from his body, "Who?! Who sent this curse?! I'LL KILL THEM!!!!"

His eyes saw the corpse and his eyes glowed brightly, spikes of resentment suddenly burst from the ground impaling the body and hoisting it up. The rusty scent of blood began to waft around the courtyard but Wei WuXian didn't care. There was too much pain in his heart.

The spikes moved, everyone turning away to hide the view of the gruesome sight as the body was shredded and ripped apart. Wei WuXian didn't feel better, his wails getting worse and more broken, Wei WuXian intertwining his fingers with Lan WangJi's hand, feeling the forehead ribbon between their palms. His body curled, forehead almost touching the unmoving chest, "I- ha-have lost everything. W-why did I l-lose you too?"

"ShiXiong, " Jiang Cheng choked painfully, "Lets bring the body inside..."

Wei WuXian whimpered as Lan Xichen picked up Lan WangJi. Wei WuXian's hands fell to his lap with the forehead ribbon in his fingers. Wei WuXian stared at it before choking and turning to his brother, "I lost him..."

Jiang Cheng had never hugged his brother tighter.

Five Days Later: GusuLan Sect

Wei WuXian knelt in front of the incense burners, the smell of sandalwood rafting around the room of the ancestral hall. At his side was Lan SiZhui and Lan Xichen, the youngest sniffing and burning paper money. It was the third day of the funeral progression and the mood hadn't gotten any better. Everyone was dressed in white, Jiang LiMei being held in Lan GengXin, Lan Xichen's wife's, arms silently as Jiang MingZhu was being held in comfort by her husband.

Lan Xichen glanced at his brother in law, "A-Ying, come let's get some food-"

"I want to stay with him..." Wei WuXian muttered softly, staring at the casket that Lan WangJi's body was currently resting in.

"A-Die, " Lan SiZhui spoke softly, "Please,"

"A-Yuan, go out with everyone else, " Wei WuXian didn't even look at the boy, "I just...just a little longer,"

Jiang Cheng looked at his wife, who was crying lightly. He nodded to Lan Xichen, the older sighing. He stood up, patting Lan SiZhui twice. The boy hesitated, giving Wei WuXian a tight hug and turning to the casket. He bowed deeply, "Rest well, Baba,"

Wei WuXian bit his tongue to avoid sobbing. He closed his eyes and waited as he heard all the footsteps leave the hall. The moment he couldn't hear them anymore he broke down, shoulders shaking violently and tears streaming.

“Wh-what am I supposed to do?” Wei WuXian asked, burning more paper money and lighting another three incense sticks.

He stood up, walking around to peer into the casket. It would be closed tomorrow morning, then lowered into the ground. Lan WangJi was dressed in elegant white robes, looking as handsome and tranquil as ever. He looked like fresh snowfall in the majestic views of Gusu.

Wei WuXian was cold and numb. He wished desperately for his husband to awaken and kiss him. He wanted this all to be a cruel dream. A nightmare. Wei WuXian noticed the bare area of Lan WangJi's forehead ribbon. It wasn't there anymore, instead it was currently tied in Wei WuXian's hair.

“My love, my husband, my Lan Zhan, ” Wei WuXian called out breathlessly. He wanted to say so many things, but wasn't sure where to start. He exhaled and sniffled. He choked, “You told me to never have to say these words between us, so why is that the only thing I feel I should tell you...” his figure shook a bit with a sob, “i'm sorry...and, thank you...”

“Rest well, A-Zhan. I love you...”

Wei WuXian didn't care for etiquette, placing one faint kiss on Lan WangJi's lips. He then forced his body to step back and just stand there, staring into the casket. He began to sing their song, tears running down his face and his heartbreaking a bit more with every note.

Lan WangJi was buried the next day and a tablet of his name rested in the Ancestral Hall. The Cloud Recesses was covered in grief and sorrow, silence gripping it like a web. It hurt more when everyone saw Wei WuXian, who's laughter and voice had once spread warmth amidst the mist and fog, but now was gone.

The days kept passing, but Wei WuXian never wore black or red again. He stayed in white, the forehead ribbon in his hair. He was either in the JingShi or the ancestral Hall. Nowhere else.

Lan SiZhui spent time with Wei WuXian more than anyone, Lan SiZhiu finding comfort in his father. Lan SiZhui had duties and he had things to take his mind away, it helped him in

some ways training and night hunting. He began to feel a bit more, slowly accepting that Lan Wangji was gone, Lan Jingyi always around to help him and distract him.

Four Months after Lan Wangji's death

Lan Sizhui gasped when he saw Wei Wuxian walk into the main hall with Lan Xichen at his side, "A-Ying, you didn't eat your breakfast again,"

Wei Wuxian didn't say anything, just nodding and sitting down. Lan Sizhui placed a hand over Wei Wuxian's, the demonic cultivator gripping it firmly and exhaling shakily, "Jiang Cheng is coming today?"

"Yes, " Lan Qiren answered softly and then asked, "Do you want to return to Lotus Pier for a while?"

Wei Wuxian looked at Lan Qiren, "I am part of the GusuLan Sect now, I will not head back. I will stay here!"

"A-Die,"

"A-Ying,"

"I was just asking, you haven't broken any rules, " Lan Qiren spoke softly, "You haven't done a lot of things. I know you're grieving, but everyone else is as well. You have a life Wuxian,"

Wei Wuxian stared at the male, teeth grinding together and eyes glossing over, "A life? I have lost my life!"

"A-Yuan, go outside," Lan Xichen ordered and Lan Sizhui frowned, but left the room to wait for the Jiang sect leader.

“A-Ying,” Lan Xichen reached out but Wei WuXian shook his head firmly and stood up, glaring at Lan Qiren, “I don’t feel like myself! I wasn’t even like this when I lived in the burial mounds! When I defected! When I turned away from my entire life! I have *never* felt this numb and broken in my two lifetimes!!”

“I’m not telling you can’t feel that way,” Lan Qiren tried to keep his voice low.

“You’ve been telling me how to live ever since I was 15!” Wei WuXian exclaimed.

“A-Ying, please calm down. Uncle is worried about you,” Lan Xichen said warmly.

“Worried about me? He probably wishes I died instead- hell I wish I died instead!!” Wei WuXian pushed away Lan Xichen’s arm and stormed out the room.

“A-Ying!” Lan Xichen stood up and rushed out after him, “A-Ying, don’t talk like that,”

“Why n-not?” Wei WuXian sniffled pausing and turning back, “Why can’t I?!”

Nearby disciples all paused seeing the scene, eyes fixing on the three. Not too far, Lan SiZhui Jiang Cheng towards the Elegance Hall to meet with Lan Xichen and Lan Qiren, conversation fading as they heard bits of the scene in front of them.

“WuXian, all I’m telling you is that its not healthy for you to enclose yourself. I’ve seen three people do it and it was painful,” Lan Qiren had followed as well, voice friendly as it could get, “You’re not the only one who isn’t hurting, everyones hurting,”

“The cultivation world isn’t grieving!” Wei WuXian exclaimed looking mocked, “They didn’t know him!! No one knew him like I did!!”

“WuXian, do you think no one understands what you’re going through?” Lan Qiren asked bluntly.

Wei WuXian yelled, “YOU DONT!”

“A-Ying...” Lan Xichen called breathlessly.

“No, no! No one understands what I’m going through, especially not you, Grandmaster Lan Qiren!” Wei WuXian’s body shook with tremors, “You aren’t me! You haven’t been losing people since the age of five!! You didn’t suffer your entire sect’s massacre!! You didn’t go through a golden transfer and then get tossed into the Burial Mounds!! You didn’t feel your mask breaking little by little everyday with every fucking insult!! You didn’t defect! Or become the cultivation world’s reject and target!! You didn’t kill your sister’s husband, then get paralyzed and watch as your new family left and marched to death, and then had your sister die in front of you!!! You didn’t kill yourself like I did during the seige all those years ago!!!!”

Everyone’s heart shattered.

Jiang Cheng choked, “S-shiXiong...”

“A-D-die,” Lan SiZhui covered his mouth in horror,

Wei WuXian sobbed, hugging himself tightly, “You we-weren’t framed. Yo-you aren’t me! I just lost everything all over again and I d-don’t know what to do or h-how to feel ANYTHING!!! To the world, Lan Zhan is Hanguang Jun, the second jade. To you he’s your nephew, brother, best friend, whatever! But for me? For me, before anything else, before he is your nephew or brother, he is my husband!!! He’s my soulmate, my savior, my lover, my best friend, my classmate, my everything!!! He believed me and loved me and cared for me when I thought no one would ever and that I didn’t even deserve it! He was my entire life a-and I j-just lost t-that...”

Lan Qiren walked forward, blinking back tears and pulling Wei WuXian into a tight embrace. He ignored the shocked stares of everyone, stroking the back of Wei WuXian’s hair as he wailed. Lan Qiren sniffled, “I’m sorry, you’re right. I can’t understand you, especially not in this. But WuXian, you are not alone, “

Wei WuXian shook his head, “I m-miss him so much,”

“I know,” Lan Qiren nodded, “I miss him too,”

Four Months Later: Eight Months after Lan WangJi’s death

“This is a terrible idea,” Jin Ling hissed at Lan JingYi and Ouyang Zizhen.

“Senior Wei wanted to talk to us anyway,” Lan JingYi reminded, “And considering he’s basically gone into unofficial seclusion in the JingShi, I miss him and want to see him a bit more,”

Lan SiZhui hangs his head and Ouyang Zizhen hits Lan JingYi on the arm with a scolding look. He then pats Lan SiZhui’s shoulder, “You don’t have to do this if you-”

“No, lets do this. Shushu also went to visit...and A-Die is closing almost everyone off. If I can get *anything* about how he truly is...” Lan SiZhui trailed off sadly.

The other three shared sympathetic glances, Lan JingYi leading the way to the JingShi. The four boys snuck around the wall finding a window. Jin Ling carefully opened it a bit, the four crouching below and listening to the conversation between Jiang Cheng and Wei WuXian.

Inside, Jiang Cheng had entered only fifteen minutes back. Wei WuXian had been sitting on the edge of the bed dressed in robes that were much too large for his body, hair open and falling in waves. He was caressing the forehead ribbon in his fingers, silver eyes staring into the distance. Jiang Cheng served up the cup of herbal tea he had brought, sitting beside his older brother and gently said, “Drink some tea,”

Wei WuXian blinked for a few moments, turning to him and nodding. He took the cup and drank it slowly, no words escaping. Jiang Cheng looked at the mess around the room and sighed. He placed the tray of food down beside Wei Wuxian as he stood up, “Eat or I swear to god, I’ll get Wen Ning to carry you to Yunmeng,”

Wei WuXian looked at Jiang Cheng, before silently taking the tray and beginning to eat. Jiang Cheng sighed sadly, moving around and cleaning up the room. He also set another fresh pot of tea to boil. After a while, he returned to his brother's side and placed the empty tray on a table, "You're still wearing white...I saw your robes. Do you want me to buy you new ones?"

Wei WuXian shook his head and then spoke, "Did you know...when I first saw these robes, I thought of them as mourning robes?"

The juniors shared pained glances. Jiang Cheng's expression softened into sadness, "I did not,"

"I didn't understand and made fun of them. I'd joke about it..." Wei WuXian sniffled, "Now I'm wearing them for that exact reason,"

"ShiXiong," Jiang Cheng sighed weakly, "We're all worried about you,"

Wei WuXian croaked, "Why?"

"The last time you stepped out of this room was to meet Zewu Jun's newborn daughter's one month celebration," Jiang Cheng stated, "That was almost 6 months ago,"

"And?" Wei WuXian looked at Jiang Cheng, "What is there for me to do? Who is waiting for me outside that door to greet me and know me?"

"ShiXiong, you aren't alone..." Jiang Cheng insisted, "And if not me or us, what about your son?"

Lan SiZhui sucked in a breath hearing himself be mentioned.

Wei WuXian also paused, a few tears slipping, "A-Yuan is an adult. He visits me, he talks to me, he tells me things, I love him, but- god Jiang Cheng I'm terrified,"

“Terrified?” Jiang Cheng was confused, “Of...SiZhui?”

“No, how can I be terrified of my own son?” Wei WuXian shook his head.

“Then?”

Wei WuXian looked down at the forehead ribbon, “If I indulge with anyone else I care about...if I let myself latch on a-again...I’m gonna lose them t-too,”

Jiang Cheng and the juniors' hearts squeezed painfully. Jiang Cheng pulled Wei WuXian into him, the older breaking down, “I’m cursed, I’m cu-cursed,”

“No, no, shut up,” Jiang Cheng denied.

“First my parents, then your parents- o-our entire sect, then Jin ZiXuan, then the Wen remnants, then Shijie, then I lost myself...” Wei WuXian cried painfully, “A-and now L-Lan Zhan...”

“ShiXiong,” Jiang Cheng gritted his teeth, “Its going to be okay,”

“No, n-no its not! I c-can’t e-even feel an-anything!” Wei WuXian shook his head, “Shidi, I c-can’t even *try* t-to smi-smile...”

More pain.

“ShiXiong, I’m going to help you, no matter what,” Jiang Cheng promised, “I promise, I am going to give you every drop of happiness and love you deserve,”

Wei WuXian cried harder, “What ha-happiness? W-what I-love? I’ll I-lose it i-in the en-end,”

Jiang Cheng closed his eyes painfully, “No, no, I’ll do something. I promise,”

Wei WuXian and Jiang Cheng pulled back, the younger wiping his brother’s tears away softly. He then smiled sadly, “A-Jie is going to take care of him, you know,”

Wei WuXian nodded sniffing and looked towards the Zither in the room, “She’ll take great care of him, Wen Qing too. Maybe my parents...” Wei WuXian smiled slightly, “He can be with his parents again...”

“Yeah, he’ll be watching over you too,” Jiang Cheng ensured, “He loves you to the ends of time,”

Wei WuXian looked down at the forehead ribbon, bringing it to his lips and kissing the cloud pattern tenderly, “I love him just as much,”

Jiang Cheng smiled, but it faded as Wei WuXian revealed.

“I’m learning Inquiry...”

The juniors all bit down to stop themselves from whimpering or sobbing. Lan SiZhui bent over, hand over his mouth and eyes closed painfully.

“Oh, shixiong...”

“I know,” Wei WuXian swallowed, “But...but maybe. Maybe...”

Jiang Cheng stopped him with a hug. Jin Ling had enough, pulling the other three and they hurried over to the front of the house. All of them inhaled shakily, calming themselves down and trying to breathe properly. Lan SiZhui placed a hand over his heart before saying, “Let’s go knock. I want to know why A-Die needed us,”

Ouyang Zizhen reached the door and knocked twice, “Senior Wei?”

Wei WuXian looked at Jiang Cheng and nodded, “Bring them inside, I asked for them,”

Jiang Cheng nodded, muttering a small sweet phrase and walked to the door. He opened the door and gave the four soft smiles, before motioning them inside and leaving himself. The four males inhaled the scent of sandalwood, Lan SiZhui feeling a small comfort touch his soul. Lan Wangji always had this scent wafting around him.

“Sit down,” Wei WuXian’s voice was soft, so unlike the Wei WuXian they had all first met and grown up with for the last 14 years.

Wei WuXian had moved to a table, the white robes fluttering around him. He had reached up tied the forehead ribbon in his hair, sitting down in front of the table where a steaming pot of tea was waiting. The juniors sat down around the table, muttering kind thanks as they were served. Wei WuXian drank his cup first, placing it down softly. He then muttered, “Do you know why I wanted to talk to you all?”

“No,” They all said.

Wei WuXian smiled weakly, but it faded just as fast. Wei WuXian nodded, “Come with me,”

He stood up and walked towards the door, leaving the JingShi. The four looked at one another startled but hurried after. They walked in silence, following Wei WuXian towards the ancestral hall.

“A-Die...” Lan SiZhui whispered.

“Sh, come,” Wei WuXian walked inside.

The four boys left their swords outside the hall, walking in as well. Wei WuXian walked to the center pedestal where the tablets for the main clan sat. Wei WuXian wordlessly knelt in front of one of them, eyes staring at the name with sorrow. The four also knelt down, Jin Ling and Lan SiZhui on either side of Wei WuXian, Ouyang Zizhen next to Jin Ling and Lan JingYi next to Lan SiZhui.

Wei WuXian inhaled, reaching forward and lighting up two incense sticks and kowtowing. The juniors followed his motions, watching Wei WuXian closely as he straightened back to his kneeling position. Finally, he spoke, “Did you know today was the day Lan Zhan and I first met...”

The juniors did not know.

Wei WuXian smiled nostalgically, “We were 15, so different, our first impression of one another wasn’t the best. I snuck into Cloud Recesses after curfew with wine,”

The four giggled amused.

“Lan Zhan caught me on the way in...thinking back, he looked surreal,” Wei WuXian spoke breathlessly, “Like an immortal of the moon with beautiful gold eyes...however, I wasn’t aware I had suddenly fallen in love, neither was he. In fact, the two of us never got along during lectures, I teased him and annoyed him to no end...” his smiled faded, “You must’ve heard of it. Fire and Ice, Yin and Yang,”

“Yes,” The four muttered hesitantly.

Wei WuXian nodded and choked a bit, “I never would have been able to remember the date if Lan Zhan hadn’t told me when we were deciding the date of our wedding,”

The juniors' eyes widened. Wedding anniversaries weren't celebrated often in the main sect families. After all, the generation before them was a jumble of ill fated marriages. Lan JingYi spoke out, "Today is yours and Hanguang Jun's..."

Wei WuXian nodded letting his tears fall again, "I never thought I could lose him...it was always the other way around. W-we both always assumed I was in danger with my reputation and weak core, he protected me..."

Wei WuXian sobbed a bit, "I di-didn't know I had to protect him to such a-an extent..."

"A-Die,"

"DaiJiu,"

"Senior Wei,"

Wei WuXian shook his head, wiping his tears quickly and shaking his head, "I'm fine. I'm fine...I just...I feel like worse than when the backlash hit me,"

The juniors shared solem looks and promised themselves to always be there for Wei WuXian.

Three Months Later: 11 months after Lan WangJi's death

Jiang Cheng raised an eyebrow at the man in front of him. He had come to Gusu to check on his brother again after learning from Lan Xichen that Wei WuXian was being watched closely by healers after finding jars upon jars of Emperor's Smile scattered around the JingShi and Wei WuXian passed out.

Lan Qiren took a sip of his tea and sighed, "One of the last conversations I had with WangJi was an argument,"

Jiang Cheng narrowed his eyes, but nodded, "Not surprising, but alright,"

Lan Qiren didn't comment on the jab, accepting it, "He told me...when I realized my mistakes, the things I've done wrong, the harm I've caused WuXian...what would it cost me?"

Jiang Cheng was now aware of the severity of this conversation, pouring himself tea and drinking it slowly, "I see...and I'm assuming you've realized now,"

Lan Qiren nodded, "And the cost was Wangji's life and his husband's laughter. A laugh I never even realized I had grown so fond of..."

Jiang Cheng nodded slowly, "I believe you should be telling my ShiXiong this stuff,"

"I did," Lan Qiren whispered, "The day before he drank until he passed out,"

"Oh geez," Jiang Cheng muttered tiredly, "Alright, Grandmaster Lan, why are you telling me this?"

"I did not know who else to speak to. Xichen is much too busy and the juniors are...the juniors," Lan Qiren explained, "Plus, you are my martial nephew in law,"

Jiang Cheng coughed a bit, before nodding, "Okay, fair enough. I've been trying to come up with a way to help him, but nothing's working. I can't fault him either, Hanguang Jun was...everything to him,"

Lan Qiren shook his head in defeat, "There must be some way...I already told Xichen to teach him Inquiry and provide any books on it, its giving WuXian some distraction but its a weak one,"

Jiang Cheng nodded with pursed lips, "When I learned the truth and heard of their marriage, there was a reason I helped them plan it. Not only out of guilt and a way to fix our

relationship, but because I knew Hanguang Jun would be able to keep ShiXiong happy and heal him as much as possible,”

“But now that's gone,” Lan Qiren clenched his fists, “And WuXian's pain became worse than ever,”

“If he had the seal and no core, he would've lost control,” Jiang Cheng put plainly, “The same way he did when Jie died. When Jin ZiXun broke the gift he had made for A-Ling. When he stormed to Nightless City when the Wen remnants died,”

The door flew open and Lan SiZhui rushed forward, his sworn brothers and cousin right behind him with alarmed faces. Lan SiZhui hit the table and blurted out, “What if we changed the timeline?!”

Jiang Cheng and Lan Qiren blinked.

“What?” Lan Qiren frowned.

“A-Die messed around with a bunch of things and he would tell me and B-Baba about it all the time,” Lan SiZhui explained, “One of those theories was time travel and changing reality. He has a large amount of notes and even a bunch of theories and arrays,”

Jiang Cheng narrowed his eyes, “Were you four listening?”

“Yes, Shushu, I will take punishment for all of us later, but think about it!” Lan SiZhui exclaimed, “We could save Baba and A-Die! And if it's possible, we might be able to fix everything from 27 years ago!”

Jin Ling burst out to add fuel to the fire, “We could save my parents!”

Jiang Cheng's eyes widened, “Oh my god,”

“Grandmaster Lan, we can save your brother, avoid Baba’s punishment entirely, save Lotus Pier, defeat Wen RuoHan earlier,” Lan SiZhui offered, “And...and...we might be able to help A-Die. If we tell him we can save Baba, he might begin to do things again,”

Ouyang Zizhen cleared his throat, “Right, but if we fail Senior Wei might become even worse or become completely obsessed with reviving the dead to the point we might seriously lose whatever sanity he has in his grief,”

Everyone looked at Ouyang Zizhen disturbed by the words. The sect leader raised an eyebrow, “No one else was going to say it,”

“Then we won’t tell him,” Lan JingYi suggested, “We’ll do it ourselves and if we need input, we can just...” He looked at Lan Qiren awkwardly as he said, “just lie about it and get our answers,”

Everyone expected Lan Qiren to say something, but instead he looked deep in thought, “...Would WuXian be able to be happy?”

“What do you mean? Of course,” Jin Ling frowned.

“No, I mean...he’s suffered much. Before and after demonic cultivation,” Lan Qiren sighed, “Do you think we could send enough things back to fix a lot of things? Things our past selves did or ways we treat him...the DafanWen Clan should be rescued,”

Lan SiZhui paused, “Uncle Wen won’t need to be a fierce corpse a-and we won’t have to live in the Burial Mounds for a few years!”

“Senior Wei won’t have to carry guilt anymore!” Lan JingYi clapped his hands.

Jiang Cheng inhaled, “Meet me at his workshop in five minutes. I’m going to ask him how to open it,”

He then turned to Lan Qiren, “Grandmaster, are you joining them?”

Lan Qiren nodded, “Sure,”

Jiang Cheng hurried out of the room and headed towards the JingShi. He knocked twice before entering. His brother was laying on his stomach in the middle of the bed, staring off in a daze. He did that often now, dazing out. Jiang Cheng cleared his throat, “ShiXiong, how do I get into your workshop?”

Wei WuXian blinked. Once, twice, three times.

“My...workshop?” He repeated, confused and slowly rolled onto his side to look at his brother, “Why do you want to go in there?”

“I...wanted to check something and i'm sure you'd have written down something on it,” Jiang Cheng explained vaguely.

Wei WuXian looked at him for a few seconds and then sighed, “Okay, get me my robes ill come w-”

“ShiXiong,” Jiang Cheng hurried over stopping him, “ShiXiong you don’t need to leave. I know you find it comforting in here,”

Wei WuXian narrowed his eyes, “You’ve been telling me to leave for months,”

“Well that was before i learned you drank yourself to sleep,” Jiang Cheng snapped.

Wei WuXian huffed, “Not my fault...it was a full moon. I saw it from the window,”

“...so?” Jiang Cheng didn’t get it.

“Lan Zhan always brought me Emperors Smile and we would stay up. I would drink the liquor and he would sit with me. We’d talk and reminisce,” Wei WuXian spoke longingly, “We first met because i snuck in liquor and under the full moon,”

Jiang Cheng both felt awful for asking and slightly blank at the information on how the two lovers spent their time. So he just nodded and awkwardly switched the conversation again, “So...how to get in?”

Wei WuXian sighed and stood up. He trudged over to a desk that was littered with a mess of trinkets. Wei WuXian surfed through the items, pulling out a long and thin metal piece resembling a needle. It was the key to the lock on the door.

Jiang Cheng grinned, reaching out, but Wei WuXian quickly moved it out of reach, “What do you need in there? It’s a mess and you wont be able to navigate it,”

“Tch, I need a lot of things. Just give me the key. I’m not gonna activate or steal anything,” Jiang Cheng clicked his tongue.

Wei WuXian narrowed his eyes, “You’ve never been this interested before...”

“ShiXiong! What do you think i'm even gonna do? ” Jiang Cheng frowned.

Wei WuXian exhaled, “Theres a lot of things in the manuscripts that cannot leave. Plus, theres random and unfinished inventions and arrays and talisman, half of the stuff in there is dangerous. And theres a shit load of nonsense,”

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, “If you want to come outside and come along with me just to work on stuff, I’m not stopping you,”

Wei WuXian hesitated and then his eyes turned hard, “No, here,”

He shoved the key into Jiang Cheng’s chest roughly, the sect leader taking it with confusion over the sudden switch, “Whats wrong?”

“Nothing, I just don’t want to risk going in there and start something I’m gonna regret,” Wei WuXian hissed and turned around, “Go,”

Jiang Cheng looked at his brother’s back sadly. He then told the other as he turned away, “ShiXiong...I will fix everything,”

Wei WuXian’s knitted his eyebrows, turning towards Jiang Cheng and watching him leave. Wei WuXian repeated, sadly and lost, “Fix everything? What can you fix?”

6 months later: 1 year and 7 months after Lan WangJi’s death

It was possible.

They had found the manuscript for time travel, reality, and other things they thought they might need. Strangely, Wei WuXian had a ton of notes and things made for going back in time. They found other notes about soul searching and the effects of soul calming, which rendered to Jiang Cheng as strange, but he didn’t ask about it. His brother had, progressively, gotten worse, especially after the first death anniversary. It had been the final push to finally turn his brother into such a weak state.

His appetite was gone and his weight had diminished. Lan WangJi’s old robes were already large on the small frame of Mo XuanYu’s body, but now, Wei WuXian was thin enough to wrap himself up in the robes and have fabric left over. He was too skinny. His face had gotten paler and his eyes were dulling with each day. The only time he seemed remotely alive was when Lan Qiren would enter the Jingshi and teach him Inquiry.

Lan Xichen had offered instead, but Lan Qiren said he had to be the one since for multiple reasons. Also, Lan Xichen already had enough with maintaining sect duties without his brothers help anymore and being a father and husband. Jin Ling had also tried to help as much as he could despite everyone telling him it wasn't necessary. But they all knew why.

Jin Ling blamed himself for everything.

He blamed himself for Lan Wangji's death. He blamed himself for his cousin's loss of his father and the declining health of Wei WuXian. He blamed himself for the suffering he was putting Wei WuXian through. Jin Ling had once come to Gusu unannounced, just to visit Wei WuXian and tell the other all things that came to his mind. Contrary, Wei WuXian did not blame Jin Ling, he had never even shown a hint of disdain even when his mood was awful.

Of course, Jiang Cheng couldn't help but feel like Wei WuXian thought he was only getting karma for their sister and late brother in law. It was a sad thought, but it made sense for his brothers mindset.

Jiang Cheng and the others had already sketched an array and they were roughly tampering and experimenting with it and seeing how things would work. Of course, they didn't mess with time yet, only redrawing and adjusting points of the array. It was rather simple. They would be sent back to a dreamlike space where only specific people would be present. The Jiang family, Wei WuXian, Twin Jades, Lan Qiren, Madam Jin, Jin Zixuan, Nie Huaisang, Nie Mingjue, Wen Qing and Wen Ning. They didn't really know how the array would hold and what would happen to their timeline now, so they had planned to write a letter to Wei WuXian explaining that if he was still there and could read it, to check the backhill and see if their bodies were present.

Right now, they were all in Wei WuXian workshop, talking about events in the past they found important when the door opened slowly. Their conversation paused and Jiang Cheng flicked his wrist, sending all the notes into a box and up Jin Ling's sleeve.

"A-Xian?" Lan Qiren looked stunned as he saw the oversized white robes and the pale face.

"Uncle Lan," Wei WuXian greeted.

The two had grown closer over the last few months, Lan Qiren able to do nothing else but to treat his nephew in law properly. He had made mistakes, unforgivable ones, but Wei WuXian had forgiven him without hesitation, even in such grief.

The silver eyes swept over them and Wei WuXian walked in slowly, “What are you doing?”

“Talking,” Lan JingYi informed.

Wei WuXian narrowed his eyes but he coughed lightly. He then glanced around and sighed, “Please don’t do anything stupid...”

“What would we even do?” Jiang Cheng asked.

Wei WuXian glanced towards a shelf, a shelf the others had found the time travel notes on. Wei WuXian’s fingers seemed to twitch before he dragged his gaze and shook his head firmly, “Theres stuff in here that might make you go mad, don’t,”

“What kind of stuff?” Lan SiZhui asked curiously.

Wei WuXian paused and he shook his head, “If the words pass my lips, I’ll be the first to go insane...” he then looked at Lan Qiren tiredly. It had been months since Wei WuXian had walked or spoken such long sentences outside of the Jingshi, “Is...Is...GengXin-Jie free?”

Lan Qiren smiled and nodded. He walked over, “Come on, lets go,”

Wei WuXian more or less leaned fully into the support, “Uncle, my headache got worse,”

“I’ll get a healer for you,” Lan Qiren muttered as they all left.

The juniors stayed silent, following behind the older three, but their faces were solemn. Jiang Cheng walked by his brother's side, "A-Mei's been wanting to see you. Since your birthdays in a few days, I can bring her,"

"Birthday..." Wei WuXian repeated the words as he was sat down, back against a large Magnolia tree.

Healers had urged them to have Wei WuXian outside as much as possible. So when he did come out, they all had meals or stayed under the large Magnolia tree in the center of Cloud Recesses, not too far from the Elegance Hall and Library Pavilion. Jiang Cheng sat at his side, while Lan Qiren went to find his niece-in-law and probably some food.

Jiang Cheng nodded, smiling and speaking softly. His brother had become a different person and it hurt so much. But he couldn't do anything else. He was lucky in the sense that the officials and the senior disciple, along with his wife, were all extremely capable and strong leaders. They understood his frequent leaves from the Sect, all aware of their former Da-Shixiong's conditions. Jiang LiMei had turned almost five months back and it was the first time Wei WuXian had left Gusu, that too.

It was the first time the public had seen Wei WuXian and the change had been heartbreaking to the world that had once hated him. No one could deny that the Yiling Patriarch seemed more dead now, than he did when he had actually died.

Shaking away the thoughts, Jiang Cheng continued the conversation, "Yeah, do you want me and A-Zhu to visit?"

"Aren't you busy?" Wei WuXian looked at his brother, Ouyang Zizhen, and Jin Ling, "You three come here so often...sorry,"

"No, no, it's not your fault," Ouyang Zizhen reassured, blinking back tears for the senior that had been a pillar for him.

"A-Ying," A melodic voice spoke.

“GengXin-Jie,” Wei WuXian looked up at the female dressed in white, a baby girl in her arms.

Lan GengXin was the oldest female of the family, with a kind heart. She cared for all of them as her real brothers and Jiang MingZhu as her own sister. The girl in her arms was her daughter who was now over a year old, Lan XiaoHong. Wei WuXian didn’t smile much, but when he did, he was with the younger children or the juniors. Lan GengXin handed her daughter to Wei WuXian, who smiled automatically as he cradled the baby, looking down at her with soft eyes, “Hello, A-Hong, its your Uncle Wei again,”

Jiang Cheng smiled, looking at Lan GengXin gratefully. She only smiled sadly and stroked the back of Wei WuXian’s hair. Wei WuXian’s smile slowly faded as he rocked back and forth, staring at Lan XiaoHong, who was staring at Wei WuXian with a giggly face.

“She’s got hints of amber in her eyes,” he muttered, “Like Big brother,”

“She does,” Lan GengXin agreed, “Hey, A-Ying. Why don’t you tell me, do you think I’ll have to worry about boys trying to court her often?”

Wei WuXian smiled again and nodded, “Yes. But she’s got a tough family, she’ll be protected. A-Yuan and A-Ling and A-Mei are her cousins after all,”

“A-Mei is going to protect her for life,” Jin Ling laughed, “Right, SiZhui,”

Lan SiZhui laughed before nodding, “Mn,”

Wei WuXian looked at Lan SiZhui at that moment and then his gaze turned nostalgic. He looked down at Lan XiaoHong, who squealed for attention, reaching up and tugging at the loose robes. The jacket was quick to respond to the small tug, slipping off Wei WuXian’s shoulder to expose more white robes. Wei WuXian saw that and sighed fondly, “Already have the Lan arm strength, A-Hong?”

Their response was a squeal and giggle.

Everyone smiled and laughed, even Wei WuXian smiled. He then lifted Lan XiaoHong up to sit properly on his knee. He pinched her cheek, “You’re going to grow up so loved,”

He then suddenly winced and his face turned pained. They had seen this enough times to know that Wei WuXian had just been visited by a dark thought. Lan GengXin took her daughter and ruffled Wei WuXian’s hair, “Oh, A-Ying. Your ribbons a mess,”

Wei WuXian quickly reached up and tugged it, hair falling loose and fluttering in the autumn wind. They’d have to go inside soon, the cold not good for the little Lan XiaoHong and Wei WuXian. Jiang Cheng watched as his brother didn’t retie his hair, instead he leaned to Jiang Cheng, resting his head on the younger’s thigh. Jiang Cheng let him, brushing the black hair and watching as Wei WuXian dazed off, fingers brushing over the forehead ribbon.

The juniors and Jiang Cheng shared a gaze.

One more month and then they could give Wei WuXian happiness.

A month later: 1 year and 8 Months after Lan WangJi’s death

“Yes, we have to do this,” Jiang Cheng nodded to Jin Ling, “Get ready to activate the array,”

Lan Qiren nodded, all of them standing around the edge of the array in a circle. Lan Qiren and Jiang Cheng activated most of the array to create the dreamspace and summon their past selves into it. The juniors would activate the teleporting feature. Their palms glowed with spiritual energy and Ouyang Zizhen gulped, “Once we do this...there’s no going back,”

“A-Xian deserves a chance,” Lan Qiren muttered.

“A chance at what?!” A yell came from behind them and they all jumped, the juniors spiritual energy pausing from the startlement.

Jiang Cheng turned back to see a pale and angry and slightly feared Wei WuXian walking towards them. Lan SiZhui yelled alarmed, “A-Die?! Weren’t you asleep?”

“Asleep my fucking ass!! What the fuck is going on?!” Wei WuXian demanded as he walked towards them.

“ShiXiong just trust us!” He said and then turned to the juniors, “Gather energy and get ready to activate it!”

Wei WuXian scowled, not stopping his pace “Jiang Cheng!!”

“DaiJiu, don’t come!!” Jin Ling screamed.

Jiang Cheng turned to his brother, “ShiXiong, please,”

“What was the note?” Wei WuXian demanded, “Stop! What are you doing!?”

Jiang Cheng ordered, “Just activate it!”

The juniors all looked stunned and hesitated as Wei WuXian told them to stop, bursting into a dash, the white robes fluttering around his weak frame.

“Do it!!” Jiang Cheng screamed as brother got too close.

He then grunted as Wei WuXian’s body crashed into his at the same time as the juniors slammed their palms down and activated the array.

Future Meet Past

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Light enveloped them all and they all felt their bodies compress and then pulled somewhere, light fading and the shocked yelps that entered their ears and snapped them into awareness. Jiang Cheng grunted in shock as he stumbled backwards, arms wrapping around the body that was thrown at him. The male pulled away as harsh coughs racked the body at Jiang Cheng blinked as he realized who it was.

“ShiXiong!!” He exclaimed startled as he saw the body lurch and out of habit, he pulled out some old fabric and held it out, Wei WuXian grabbing it and coughing out small amounts red and some other fluids.

Jiang Cheng patted his back with a sigh and glanced back to see the four juniors all helping one another, and holding their heads, probably dizzy from the transfer. Lan Qiren had his eyes closed, but opened them and was now at Wei WuXian’s side. He looked startled and then looked at Jiang Cheng, “Why is he here?”

“Where is here?!” Wei WuXian croaked, before coughing again and Jiang Cheng wordlessly brought him to sit on the floor.

“A-Die!!” Lan SiZhui called alarmed, “A-Die, did you take the medicine the healers made for you?”

Wei Wuxian shook his head, “I just saw that n-note and ran,”

“You ran?!” Everyone exclaimed knowing that the sudden exertion would not do well to the already weak body.

Footsteps rushed towards them and Jiang Cheng looked up, eyes widening. Lan JingYi stepped in front of the family, eyes narrowed, “Who are you? Stay back,”

“I’m a doctor!” The female told him and Jiang Cheng saw Wei WuXian’s body still other than the harsh panting.

“JingYi,” He said, “You can trust her,”

Lan JingYi frowned, but stepped back.

Jiang Cheng bowed his head and the female in red sun robes bent down, “Young Mast-”

Wei WuXian looked up, eyes widening in horror, “Q-qing Jie?”

Wen Qing paused, confused and surprised. Jiang Cheng gulped, “L-Lady Wen, please, is my shixiong alright?”

Wen Qing blinked and placed two fingers against Wei WuXian’s chest. She then took his pulse and frowned. She stared at Wei WuXian and then at the robes. Reaching out, she tugged and gasped at how loose they were. Lan Qiren nodded, “Lady Wen, he’s thin, we know. He’s also weak, right now,”

Wen Qing nodded, shuffling and taking out a small jar. She poured out a small pill and held it out. Jiang Cheng took it, “ShiXiong, eat it,”

Wei WuXian just opened his mouth, still staring at Wen Qing with unhidden horror. He swallowed the pill, coughing a bit. He then finally seemed to gather himself and repeated, “Qing Jie...how...”

“Do I know you?” Wen Qing frowned confused.

Wei WuXian blinked and then he stood up, Jiang Cheng supporting him. He then turned to Jiang Cheng and his voice wavered, “What...have you done?”

“ShiXiong-”

“How is Wen Qing here?!” Wei WuXian demanded.

“Wen...Qing?” Lan SiZhui repeated and he looked at Wen Qing with surprise.

“Daijiu, calm down,” Jin Ling rushed, “You weren’t supposed to teleport with us!”

“Teleport?!” Wei WuXian repeated and he glared at his brother, “Jiang Cheng! Explain to me what the fuck is going on?!”

“Jiang Cheng?!” Voice chorused, shocked and Wei WuXian’s face turned slack.

The group from the future all turned to see a bunch of people staring at them. Three Lans, Two Wens, Five Jiangs, Two Nies, and Two Jins. Lan Qiren swallowed, “Well, at least we know it worked,”

Wei WuXian stepped forward and his eyes widened, fear trickling to them, “What...what the hell...h-how...” he then sucked in a harsh breath as he caught the amber eyes and cold face, “L-Lan Zh-zhan...”

Lan WangJi’s eyebrows furrowed slightly in confusion. Jiang Cheng grabbed Wei WuXian quickly, “ShiXiong, thats not our- your Lan WangJi,”

Wei WuXian looked at him confused and slightly terrified, “Wh-what? He- Why-”

“A-Xian,” Lan Qiren touched his shoulder, “Let us explain,”

Wei WuXian swallowed and nodded face pale and breathing shallow. Jiang Cheng motioned to Lan Qiren to speak as he sent a soft and light stream of spiritual energy to his brother. Lan Qiren nodded and stepped out, saluting, “I am sure you all are wondering where you are and who we are, and let us explain. For starters, we brought you all here,”

“Why would you do that?” Yu ZiYuan snapped, Jiang Cheng and Wei WuXian both looking at her with nostalgia.

(From here on out, our future JC, WWX, and LQR will be referred to as: Jiang WanYin, Wei WuXian, and Grandmaster Lan [But the other characters will call them by titles]

Past JC and WWX will be referred to with birth names: Jiang Cheng and Wei Ying

Past LQR will remain as Lan Qiren)

“We’ll explain that. First, let us introduce ourselves as we already know all of you, my name is Lan Qiren, title Grandmaster Lan from the GusuLan Sect,” He introduced, everyone’s eyes widening and looking between the two Lan Qiren’s. Seeing this, Grandmaster Lan cleared his throat, “You may address us by our titles to avoid confusion. Please, call me Grandmaster Lan as I am from almost 30 years in the future,”

Surprised noises and a few doubtful glares were sent his way. Wei WuXian also looked lost, “We’re from what?!”

Jiang WanYin, sighed and bowed, “We’re all from 30 years in the future. I am Jiang Cheng, courtesy name Wanyin. Sect Leader of the YunmengJiang Sect. You may address me with my title of Sandu Shengshou,”

The past version of himself gaped, along with the young Wei Ying and Jiang Yanli. Yu ZiYuan and Jiang Fengmian also gasped.

“A-Cheng?” Jiang Fengmian called.

Jiang WanYin smiled a bit awkwardly, “Father,”

He then looked towards Wei WuXian, “ShiXiong, since you’re here now, just introduce yourself,”

Wei WuXian was blinking, still dazed. He was confused but nodded, bowing, “Wei Ying, courtesy name WuXian-” he ignored the startled gasps from everyone and couldn’t blame them. His body was quite different as were the robes, “Previously of the YunmengJiang Sect, now the GusuLan Sect,” he paused here looking at Grandmaster Lan, who nodded and smiled.

“And your title,” Jiang WanYin muttered.

Wei WuXian scowled bitterly but sighed, “Title, Yiling Patriarch,”

“Wait, wait, you’re me?!” Wei Ying exclaimed.

Wei WuXian paused and sighed, “Yes! I know, I know, I’m shorter than what I’m supposed to be and this body isn’t exactly mine, but I’ve been in it for 14 years, so I’ve basically come to terms with it,”

Jiang Yanli walked forward and Wei WuXian tensed, staring at her with what was undisclosed pain. Jiang WanYin also stared at her with a soft expression, “Jie,”

“S-shijie...”

“A-Xian? A-Cheng?” Jiang Yanli called hesitantly, “Its really you?”

The two nodded. Wei WuXian then choked out, tears swelled, “Fuck- shit- damn it- Shidi- I can’t-”

Jiang WanYin pulled him close, Wei WuXian gripping his robes, while small tremors began to work through his body, “Shidi, shidi, what- what did you do?!”

Jiang Yanli and the past versions of the brothers were astounded by the action. Wei Ying and Jiang Cheng were close, but not...THAT close, especially to openly so affection and for the younger brother to be holding the older one in such a way. Jiang Yanli looked worried, “XianXian?”

Wei WuXian flinched and Jiang WanYin spoke, “Jie, you...ShiXiong isn’t the Wei WuXian you know...at the moment...”

“Kids,” Grandmaster Lan turned to the younger four, who had been watching everything, “You’re next,”

Jin Ling was kind of in a daze, staring at his mother and father and his shaking uncle. Lan SiZhui stepped forward, “My birth name is Wen Yuan,”

“Wen?” Wen Ning repeated, “But...a-aren’t those L-Lan sect robes?”

“Yes,” Lan SiZhui smiled, “When I was young, my father-” he winced as Wei WuXian seemed to whimper, “brought me to the GusuLan Sect and gave me his name and a courtesy. So, now, I am known as Lan Yuan, courtesy name SiZhui,”

“Why would you be brought to our sect?” Lan Xichen asked politely.

“That will be explained,” Jiang WanYin cut in.

Lan JingYi stepped up next, “I am a Lan from birth. My name is Lan JingYi of the GusuLan Sect,”

Ouyang Zizhen stepped up, “Ouyang Zizhen. Sect Leader of the OuyangBailing Sect and sworn brothers with these three idiots,” he motioned to Lan SiZhui, Lan JingYi and Jin Ling.

Jin Ling was nudged and he cleared his throat, “Erm...Jin Ling, courtesy RuLan. Sect Leader of the LanlingJin Sect...” he then shifted, “Do I say my parents?”

“Sure,” Grandmaster Lan motioned.

Jin Ling nodded, “Son of Jin ZiXuan and Jiang Yanli,”

“WHAT?!?!” Jiang Cheng and Wei Ying screamed.

Jiang Yanli, Jiang Fengmian, and Yu ZiYuan looked shocked, while Jin ZiXuan looked as if he had been slapped. Madam Jin paused and then exclaimed, “But- wasn’t the engagement broken?”

Jin Ling nodded, “Yes, it was broken indeed when my father and mother were still children. But they do end up getting married out of love and have me,”

“WHAT?!” The younger yunmeng bros exclaimed again.

“Peacock- you-” Wei Ying was about to turn, when his older self seemed to gain his bearing and command, “Don’t yell at him, brat!”

Everyone looked at Wei WuXian shocked. They all knew it was because Wei WuXian/Wei Ying had punched Jin ZiXuan, the engagement broke off. So why was his future self different? Wei WuXian just glared at his past self. He then inhaled and turned to the group from his time, “no one, is going to do anything! Until I get an answer...”

“Senior Wei-”

“What the fuck did you six do!?!?” Wei WuXian screamed and he then looked at Grandmaster Lan, “And you? Uncle, are you serious?! You condoned this?!”

Multiple choking sounds.

“Uncle?!” Lan Qiren and Wei Ying exclaimed.

“Yes, do you not see the white robes and the forehead ribbon?” Wei WuXian gestured to himself, “I’m married-” he paused and sputtered, “was- am- I- forget it and just shut up!!!”

He then glared at the five males in front of him. Jiang WanYin and Grandmaster Lan exchanged eye contact, while the four juniors shivered under the gaze hanging their heads. Lan SiZhui was a bit better, since he had faced the glare from his other father before, “A-Die-”

“A-Yuan, spit it out,” Wei WuXian ordered.

Lan SiZhui bit his lip and then winced, “Its- this was kind of my idea...”

Wei WuXian stared at him, “What?”

“ShiXiong,” Jiang WanYin rushed in and looked at the past people, “Everyone, we did this for a very good reason,”

“And that reason is?” Nie MingJue asked.

Jiang WanYin cleared his throat, “First, sit down. The information I’m about to give is heavy and...shocking, but I swear on my family, including the ancestors of the YunmengJiang Sect, everything I say is true,”

With such an oath, everyone from the past was now anxious for the information. Nie Huaisang cleared his throat, “Uh- Sandu Shengshou...there are no seats for us to sit,”

Jiang WanYin smiled and waved his wrist, a group of singles, four doubles, one triple, and one four person seat appeared.

Everyone was startled, but the future male gave no explanation. Instead, he pulled Wei WuXian to sit beside him. The four juniors sat next to one another on the four person seat, Grandmaster Lan sitting in a singular person seat. The past people were a bit more cautious, but slowly, they all sat. The adults all had their own separate singular seats. Jin ZiXuan and Nie Huaisang had been beside one another and sat together. The three yunmeng siblings sat with one another, the Wen siblings and the Twin Jades doing the same.

“Wonderful,” Jiang WanYin smiled and looked at his brother, “We’re from the future as stated before and...its not the best,”

“Shidi...” Wei WuXian’s voice held a warning.

Jiang WanYin hesitated but he kept going, “before I begin, I need to ask...have you all been to Gusu for lectures?”

Multiple nods.

“Alright, what about the discussion conference in Qishan? Wen Ning, have you met Wei Ying, yet?” Jiang WanYin asked.

Wen Ning and Wei Ying both shook their heads. Jiang Cheng provided, “The conference is in three weeks,”

“Good, good,” Grandmaster Lan sighed, “That means Cloud Recesses and my brother are fine,”

“What?” The three Lan’s looked slightly alert now.

Wei WuXian suddenly narrowed his eyes, “Wait...please tell me you did not find my manuscripts about reality and time travel...”

Jiang WanYin gulped, “ShiXiong, listen to me all the way first...just let me inform them of what we’re about to show them so they can change the past-”

“WHAT?!” Wei WuXian screamed, everyone from the past watching with slight unsettlement at how different the future Wei Ying seemed, “What the hell are you talking about?!”

Jiang WanYin smiled tightly, “We’re going to show you all the upcoming future and things about all of you-”

“WHAT?!” Wei WuXian yelled again, “Are you insane?! What have you done?!”

“Senior Wei, please calm down,” Ouyang Zizhen pleaded.

“Calm down?! Calm down?!?! We are in a fucking black void with a room full of people from the past, almost everyone in front of us is DEAD!! How am I supposed to calm down when I know you five walked into my workshop and messed with time, and are about to give information of the future to a bunch of people from the past!!!???” Wei WuXian scolded all of them, Jiang WanYin and the juniors wincing.

“Wait...what?” Jin ZiXuan choked, “Half of us are dead!!?”

Wei WuXian stiffened at the voice and he looked at Jin ZiXuan with a complicated expression, before turning away and glaring at Grandmaster Lan, “Why did you agree to this?!”

“Because, we did it for a very important reason...” Grandmaster Lan remained calm, “Think of it, we can save everyone!”

Wei WuXian stared and then he looked at the people of the past. His eyes narrowed and jaw clenched, “No, no, absolutely not. Give me the array sketch!”

He extended a hand and Jiang WanYin swallowed, “ShiXiong-”

“Fuck this. We’re leaving. We’re going home!” Wei WuXian snapped, “Give me the array. Let me fix it and reverse the features!”

“A-Die, please, let Shushu explain our reasons!” Lan SiZhui stood up, “A-Die, we were wrong, yes, we didn’t inform you and went into your workshop-”

Wei WuXian looked ready to yell again, but Jin Ling rushed up as well, both son and nephew kneeling in front of Wei WuXian, “DaiJiu, DaiJiu, we’re really sorry. We know its wrong, we’ll take any punishment you give us if you want, but we are just asking you to give us a chance to explain and to trust us...plus, if this works, we can save everyone. Not only from 27 years ago, but we could stop Hanguang Jun from dying!”

The last sentence made Wei WuXian flinch violently and horrible, horrible broken sorrow took over his face. Jiang Yanli looked at her Wei Ying, who was watching with a worried expression. Part of her was terrified, that the future of her brother was so...broken.

“I have watched everybody in this room that dies, *die* ,” Wei WuXian croaked, and the past Wei Ying inhaled sharply, heart thumping loudly against his ribs. Jiang Yanli softly took his hand and squeezed it, sharing a look with Jiang Cheng, “Only one person here died without me,”

“A-Die, let Shushu explain,” Lan SiZhui begged.

“Yes, JiuJiu has to tell the people of the past what’s going to be shown because words are easy to doubt,” Jin Ling nodded, “It’ll work, it has to. I doubt anyone here wants their friends and family to die,”

Lan JingYi and Ouyang Zizhen saw the doubtful face so they also rushed forward and kneeled, Wei WuXian’s eyes widening. Jiang WanYin chuckled, smiling fondly. Even Grandmaster Lan couldn’t help but shake his head and smile.

“Senior Wei, we promise, there are no tricks, no pranks, everything is real and it needs to be handled properly so everyone can understand,” Ouyang Zizhen explained.

“Senior Wei, we know how you’ve been the last year and a half and finding the letter and us in the back hills probably didn’t help, but it’ll be worth it!” Lan JingYi nodded.

Wei WuXian looked at the four boys kneeling to him and he had a high reason to believe they’d do a full bow if he said something else. So, with a sigh he reached forward and flicked all their heads weakly, “Little idiots,”

All four juniors giggled, many people of the past also unable to hold back grins. Jiang Fengmian looked at his ward, “Looks like you’re good with young children throughout your life,”

Wei Ying laughed and Jiang WanYin glanced over with a nostalgic expression. He hadn’t heard his brother laugh like that for a while. He saw Jiang Yanli looked at him with a soft expression and he only smiled warmly, turning back. Wei WuXian huffed and nodded, “Alright, fine. I’ll let you explain and won’t interrupt,”

The four juniors sprang up and tackled Wei WuXian in a hug, Jiang WanYin smoothly slipping out of the way. Wei WuXian grunted and coughed, “Alright! Stop! I’m weak and frail! Squeeze me anymore my bones are going to break!”

“That’s your fault for not eating,” Grandmaster Lan scolded.

“Tch, you should give him chilli oil,” Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, “He’ll eat anything with that,”

“Spice isn’t good for me,” Wei WuXian informed the younger self, “At least, not anymore. It doesn’t sit well with me...”

“...and he doesn’t eat spice anymore,” Jiang WanYin informed.

“What?” Wei Ying gaped, “Why not?! Don’t tell me I get used to the blander food of Gusu?!”

Wei WuXian smiled sadly, “It’s bland, yes. But my...” he gulped with difficulty and the word got caught in his throat so he shook his head, “someone always cooked for me, the best meals to fit my taste. Even when I was sick, he’d...he’d care, a lot...”

Wei WuXian’s smile had faded and his eyes suddenly looked dazed. Jiang WanYin grimaced, “Not again...”

Wen Qing frowned, “How long has he been like this?”

“20 months almost,” Grandmaster Lan informed, “But, it got really bad eight months ago. It’s when he everything got worse,”

“What happened?” Nie Huaisang asked worriedly.

Lan SiZhui got out with difficulty, “A one year anniversary...”

“Aren’t anniversaries...good?” Jin ZiXuan raised an eyebrow.

“Not this one,” Grandmaster Lan sighed, “When the day had passed, he got a lot worse and could barely eat or move. He barely even leaves the Jingshi,”

“What’s the jingshi?” Jiang Yanli asked curiously.

Wei WuXian had been nudged out of his daze and he informed without thinking, “Its where my husband lived in Cloud Recesses, but ever since we married, I lived there too,”

Lan Qiren choked, almost spitting out blood from shock, Lan Xichen gasping in a very un-Lan way and Lan Wangji’s placid mask broke into shock. Jiang Wanyin face palmed, “Seriously? No warning?”

“What? Oh-” Wei WuXian looked at the three Lan’s of the past, “Uh...surprise?”

“Hold on- back up-” Jiang Cheng announced and turned to Wei Ying who was gaping in shock, “You’re a cutsleeve?”

“I wasn’t aware of this!!” Wei Ying exclaimed seeing everyone from the past looking at him.

Ouyang Zizhen couldn’t help but remark, “You are and you’re already in love with your future husband, just like he is with you!”

“WHAT?!” Wei WuXian shrieked and his face suddenly red, brain in absolute shambles, “Already?!”

“Yeah, but you don’t confess until like...a lot of shit and death and tragedy,” Lan Jingyi began to list, “Oh- and after you get in that body our Senior Wei is in and when you’re about to die!”

Wei Ying looked ready to pass out and Lan Wangji's mind was spinning. Lan Xichen was barely holding back giggles, the urge falling into confusion as he heard Jin Ling.

"Jingyi- stop," Jin Ling hissed, nudging his sworn brother, "DaiJiu can barely handle hearing about their relationship, anymore,"

Lan Jingyi paled and he rambled, "Senior Wei- I'm sorry- I-"

"Its fine," Wei WuXian stopped him painfully, "Its...good memories...very, very, good memories..." His voice turned distant and he swallowed down a lump mumbling, "Its always good to remember them...good times, not...not... *that* ,"

Lan Wangji hesitated before speaking hesitantly, "Is...everything alright?"

Wei WuXian blinked and he exhaled shakily. A sad laugh slipped from his lips and he looked at Lan Wangji, eyes searching. But that boy wasn't his husband...this boy probably hadn't even realized his feelings yet. Wei WuXian turned away, closing his eyes as tears swelled in them again, "How can everything be alright, when I have lost everything?"

Wei Ying froze, "W-what? What do you mean? What happened to everyone?"

"He said *everything* ," Jiang Cheng looked at his brother.

"I know, but...I lose things all the time and do you see me like that?" Wei Ying raised an eyebrow, "I must've lost someone close to-"

And then he froze.

"Wei-xiong?" Nie Huaisang called.

Wei Ying looked at his older self, who still had his eyes closed. He shouldn't ask, he shouldn't, but something in him was terrified and his voice came out slightly feared, "M-my future husband d-died 20 months ago..."

Everyone from the future suddenly froze. Wei WuXian reopened his eyes, but his body suddenly trembled. His fingers curled and he looked at his younger self with something similar to anger, but Wei Ying knew better. That was grief.

"Y-you..." Wei WuXian's voice wavered, "Y-you can't sh-shut up, can y-you?!"

Wei Ying flinched slightly but he nodded, "I know I probably shouldn't have asked, but...but...I couldn't just..."

Wei WuXian understood and turned away, inhaling shakily. He looked at the three Lan's that seemed to have stilled with fear. Wei WuXian then gritted his teeth and his voice broke, turning to Jiang WanYin, "Take us home!"

"Shixiong, thats not the array works..." Jiang WanYin frowned.

"Then I'll make it work!!" Wei WuXian stood up, hand glowing red and he slammed it on the ground, Jiang WanYin yelling in warning.

A huge array lit up underneath them and Wei WuXian shakily stood up, staring at it with slight surprise. But then his focus broke as he heard a voice speak.

"-go find Wei WuXian, he doesn't have his sword,"

The black had vanished and everyone from the past gasped at the sudden scene. There was a fight going on and the sky was dark, stars glittering and the silver light of the moon bathing down. There were numerous disciples and cultivators, a few in familiar sect robes but different faces, but they were all fighting these shadow creatures.

Madam Jin suddenly realized, “Wait- this is Koi Tower!!!”

“What is going-” Nie MingJue stopped when he saw the people from the future.

All of them were on their feet, faces pale and horror on them. He trailed off, “on...are you all okay?”

“Hey, Lan Zhan, its you!” Wei Ying pointed to a scene in front of them.

Grandmaster Lan and an older version of Lan WangJi were fighting those shadow creatures.

Lan WangJi blinked confused and after slashing at two copies, “What?”

“Wei WuXian doesn’t have his sword and I don’t hear a flute,” Grandmaster explained, while fighting “I don’t want you to fall into despair if he gets hurt,”

“Why would Second Young Master Lan fall into despair if you get hurt?” Yu ZiYuan frowned.

“Yeah, didn’t you guys argue every time you met?” Jiang Cheng raised an eyebrow.

Lan WangJi was about to respond but saw something fly towards his uncle at alarming speeds. He yelled alarmed, shoving Lan Qiren out of the way and yelling,

“UNCLE!!”

They all snapped their eyes towards the yell and everyone gasped.

They saw another Grandmaster Lan frozen, eyes wide and face paling as he stared at Lan WangJi who had shoved him out of the way.

“WANGJI!!!” Grandmaster Lan yelled.

“La-Lan Zhan-” Wei Ying and Wei WuXian both inhaled sharply.

Everyone was frozen as they saw an older version of Lan WangJi standing there stiff with a shadowy creature’s talons pierced into his chest.

“No...” Wei WuXian whispered.

They watched as Lan WangJi looked down at the talons and then at the creature. His face suddenly twisted into determination and everyone’s hearts began to thump loudly. Lan WangJi quickly grabbed the creature’s wrist, restricting it from pulling its talons away.

“No...no...he wouldn’t!” Lan SiZhui exclaimed.

“WangJi, what are you doing?” The other grandmaster Lan demanded, slashing at another creature and trying to get to his nephew.

“Uncle,” Lan WangJi looked at him and gave a pleading smile, “Please-”

“Lan Zhan!!? Where are you?!!”

“That’s you!” Yu ZiYuan looked at Wei WuXian.

Wei WuXian didn't respond, "No, stop. This...this can't be right..."

Grandmaster Lan swallowed, "A-Xian-"

Lan SiZhui shook, "Sh-Shushu- what is going on?!"

Jiang WanYin shook his head in disbelief.

Lan WangJi closed his eyes at hearing Wei WuXian's voice. He shook his head, telling his Uncle firmly, "Take care of Wei Ying for me, please protect him, please Uncle,"

"What?" Wei Ying muttered, "Why would..."

He paused when his older self suddenly choked and a few tears fell. Jiang Cheng gaped at his brother's future self, *'Wei Ying doesn't cry...he hasn't cried in...years'*

Grandmaster Lan stared at him shocked and then screamed his nephew's birth name as Lan WangJi walked forward and stabbed Bichen straight into the creature that had been struggling in Lan WangJi's grip. The arm went right through Lan WangJi's chest, blood spitting out from the Second Jade's mouth.

"WANGJI!!!!" Lan Qiren and Lan Xichen screamed

Wei Ying gasped horribly, his heart suddenly dropping and a cold feeling slashed through him. Wei WuXian's eyes widened in horror and his head shook, "Stop..."

The creature let out a wail of pain and all the copies vibrated before bursting into particles and fading away. The battle began to slow and everyone who saw the jade gasped and froze. They all suddenly saw Wei WuXian.

He was different than the one with them right now. The one being shown to them was dressed in black outer robes with red under robes and looked much healthier. He wasn't thin and he didn't look half dead like the other one. His hair was tied up in a familiar red ribbon, not the white forehead ribbon.

He had been running and searching, came to a horrified stillness when he saw Lan WangJi with an arm pierced into his chest and Bichen pierced through the creature.

“Stop...” Wei WuXian begged under his breath.

They all watched horrified into shock as Wei WuXian suddenly had tears swell up and the black flute that had been in his fingers, clattered to the ground and he screamed in horror, “LAN ZHAN!”

They heard a few gasps of horror and choked cries. Eyes that weren't too frozen looked towards the four juniors, all which had stilled and paled, tears falling down Jin Ling and Lan SiZhui's cheeks, while the other two were trying to hold back from crying.

The creature vibrated and it exploded much like the others, the black substance fading and the corpse of an aged man fell to the ground. Bichen had been released from the corpse, but it clattered to the ground. Lan WangJi stumbled back, meeting his uncle's terrified gaze before falling backwards.

Wei WuXian dashed forward, falling to his knees as he caught Lan WangJi and cardeled him. Tears were streaming down his face, “NO NO NO NO!”

“STOP!!!!!!!!!!” Wei WuXian screamed and his eyes turned red, wisp of black and red bursting out and he fell to the ground, slamming his hands down to catch himself and the array flickered madly, the scene vanishing and returning the black void.

Wei WuXian's whole body was vibrating, fingers curling on the ground as he couldn't cold back anymore and began to sob. Jiang WanYin snapped out of his shock and grabbed his

brother, hugging tightly, “Shixiong, Shixiong, I’m here, I’m here, it’ll be fine,”

“SHUT UP!!” Wei WuXian shoved him away and Jiang WanYin grunted, “It won’t be fine!! It’s never going to be fine!! Lan Zhan is dead!!!!”

Wei Ying was shaking in his seat and he didn’t even notice there were tears streaming until Jiang Cheng yelped alarmed, “Wei WuXian, you’re crying!!”

Jiang Cheng’s words made many eyes go to the past Wei Ying, who was pale and looked almost as terrified as his future self. Jiang Yanli held her brother worriedly, “XianXian? XianXian,”

“Sh-shijie...” Wei Ying whispered, only his siblings hearing his words, “Everything feels c-cold...sh-shijie, it h-hurts...I c-can’t...”

Jiang Yanli blinked, while her youngest brother looked a mixture of confused and worried. She then looked towards the future Wei WuXian and thought back to the three Lan’s reactions from earlier. Quickly, she pieced together what was going on and she gasped, hugging her brother tightly.

“A-Xian,” Grandmaster Lan crouched down as well, “A-Xian, we’re here, we’re all here,”

Wei WuXian whimpered and he shook his head, “H-he’s gone...h-he’s gone...”

“A-D-d-Die!” Lan SiZhui suddenly screamed loudly, body running and throwing himself into Wei WuXian, hugging him tightly as loud wails echoed in the space, “Th-there was an a-ar-arm through- through-”

Wei WuXian hugged Lan SiZhui tightly, swallowing and placing soft kisses all over the boys head, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry,”

“Why are you sorry?” Nie MingJue asked a bit breathlessly, looking towards Lan Xichen, who had pulled Lan WangJi into a tight hug and was slightly trembling. Lan WangJi made no move to push away either, taken aback by everything and finding some sort of stability in his older brother’s embrace, hands subconsciously fisting his brother’s white robes.

“I co-couldn’t protect h-him...” Wei WuXian choked, patting Lan SiZhui’s back and stroking his head softly as the junior’s sobs decreased into whimpers.

“S-senior Wei?” Lan JingYi frowned.

Jin Ling held Jiang WanYin for support as he stood and wiped away his tears, “If it’s anyone’s fault, it’s mine. I shouldn’t have held the discussion conference when that curse s-showed up in Lanling. DaiJiu, SiZhui, I-I’m so sorry...”

Wei WuXian and Lan SiZhui both looked at the golden robed boy. Lan SiZhui stood up and hugged Jin Ling tightly, Wei WuXian being supported to his feet wobbly by Grandmaster Lan, “It’s not your f-fault Jin Ling,”

“ShiXiong, with all my respect, even if you managed to find him in time, WangJi made that choice to kill the curse and he knew that it would’ve killed him,” Jiang WanYin said softly.

Wei WuXian looked angry and exclaimed, “Why should he sacrifice himself for everyone?! Hasn’t he a-already sacrificed so much for them? For me?”

Wei Ying looked on the edge of passing out, “Wh-what...”

Lan Xichen pulled back a bit and looked down at his brother, who was in a dilemma. He knew that at the moment, his brother wasn’t completely sure of his feelings towards Wei WuXian, but with everything going on he was slowly beginning to understand. Lan Xichen had always known, or at least had an idea of it. He glanced over to Wei Ying, the three yunmeng siblings sitting right beside them, and then nudged his brother, “WangJi, Young Master Wei looks very startled by the scene...call him and reassure him,”

The glare Lan WangJi sent him was not unexpected, but it faded very quickly as Lan WangJi saw Wei Ying's expression and how the two Jiang siblings were muttering and talking to him softly. Lan WangJi cleared his throat and then called, "Wei Ying,"

Jiang Yanli looked towards them and smiled, leaning back to give Wei Ying space, the boy responding at once and looking at Lan WangJi, who cleared his throat, "I'm fine, that...that was 30 years in the future, and it might not happen anymore,"

Wei WuXian was staring at him dumbfounded before he exhaled and nodded, color softly returning to his face, "Yeah, you're right. You're perfectly fine and alive right now,"

"A-Xian, sit down, take deep breaths," Grandmaster Lan urged.

"Take deep breaths?" Wei WuXian humored and he did so, before laughing and a pained smile tore at his face, "You want to save the past? You want to avoid the deaths of almost everyone in the room?"

His words got everyone's attention, Wen Qing narrowed her eyes slightly. She could see how unstable Wei WuXian was at the moment and secretly, she had a needle ready, just in case. Jin ZiXuan nodded, "How do we change...whatever is coming?"

"Its very easy!" Wei WuXian grinned brightly, but he looked mad.

"Shixiong," Jiang WanYin said, unsettled.

"All you have to do is kill a few people," Wei WuXian told them and then he looked irritated, "Allow me to get rid of the biggest point,"

He extended his hand out and screams of shock lit up as Wei Ying's body shot forward, throat held tightly by his future self, who was glaring at him with hate and pain. Wei Ying gasped, clawing at the hand and feet trashing. He choked, "Le-Let g-go!"

Multiple voices screamed out for Wei Ying.

“ShiXiong, no!!” Jiang WanYin yelled alarmed, “Drop him!!!”

Wei WuXian ignored him, squeezing tighter and Wei Ying choked, trying to get air and face turning red and veins popping. Jiang Yanli rushed forward, “A-Xian! A-Xian! Drop him!!”

Wei WuXian let out a broken chuckle, “Why should I? Kill me, you avoid half the deaths in this room!!”

“Impossible!” Jiang Cheng exclaimed.

“Drop him!!” Jiang WanYin ordered and tried to pull Wei WuXian away, but it didnt work.

Wei Ying gasped for air and his feet started slowing down, eyes fighting to stay open. Seeing this, Wen Qing finally had enough and rushed forward. She then slammed her hand against Wei WuXian’s neck, the male gasping and releasing Wei Ying, who fell to the ground and began to cough violently. Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli ran to him, the younger Jiang Cheng about to yell in anger before seeing a pale faced Wei WuXian.

Wei WuXian stumbled back, hand shakily reaching for his neck and he turned to Wen Qing, “Y-you-”

He fell backwards, eyes falling shut and Jiang WanYin yelped, catching him.

Silence.

“What the hell just happened?!” Nie Huaisang exclaimed.

Wen Qing looked at the future Wei WuXian and he looked at Jiang WanYin, “Has he been like this for a long time?”

Jiang WanYin faltered in his steps as he placed his brother to lie down, resting the olders head in his lap as he sat down. For a few seconds he didn’t answer and he frowned, “I don’t...I don’t know. Just ever since WangJi died, but I don’t know how he was before that...I don’t live with him anymore, and he never really talked to anyone except WangJi,”

“W-what-” Wei Ying sat up, catching his breath, “What did he mean when he said that if I died half the room wont die?”

“Don’t listen to him,” Ouyang Zizhen responded quickly.

“Lets move on,” Lan JingYi exhaled shakily, “I think the sooner we begin, the more Senior Wei can relax. He didn’t take his medication, overexerted his body, suddenly seen a bunch of dead people alive, and he just saw Hanguang Jun die all over again. His mind is in chaos,”

Everyone nodded slowly and sat back, Jiang Yanli helping Wei Ying back to his seat. Grandmaster Lan cleared his throat, “To explain this dream space simply, the array beneath the floor will react to us. We’ll send spiritual energy while thinking of the scene we want to show you and show that. And then once you all see the future, we can go into your individual futures since they’re all interconnected and both build up many of the tragedies we’ve faced,”

Hesitant nods.

Jin Ling smiled, “Before we start, we should probably calm down from everything that just happened and wait for DaiJiu to wake up soon...”

“He’ll wake up when y-you pull out ne-needle,” Wen Ning informed softly, “B-but it h-has some c-calming medicine and w-will stabilize his q-qi,”

Jiang WanYin saluted, “Thank you,” he then looked at his younger self, “You, little me. You owe them,”

“Why can’t you owe them in your time?”

“Because Lady Wen is dead and Wen Ning is technically dead,” Jiang WanYin deadpanned.

The two siblings froze and Lan SiZhui groaned, “We are not doing a very good job at giving out information in a easy way to not overwhelm them,”

“Definitely not,” Grandmaster Lan sighed and waved his hands a bunch of tables with food and tea appearing, “I’d suggest to eat somethings for the future you’re about to see,”

Silently, they did as told, many eyes subconsciously looking between the young Wei Ying who was chattering and smiling and laughing to his friends and siblings, and the passed out Wei WuXian whose expression had only shown pain and grief the entire time.

‘What the hell happened in the future to cause such a dramatic change?’

Chapter End Notes

This was such an awful chapter, im sorry. The actual reacting will start next chapter. Also...please be patient with me, this book is a bit difficult and im still working on other things along with finals coming up. :)

Soul Summoning

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When Wei Ying had gone to sleep, he had not expected himself to wake up in a black void with a bunch of cultivators and six people who apparently were from the future. At first, he was very convinced that he was dreaming. But then they saw... *that* .

The picture of the older Lan WangJi dying was still in his mind and it made him cold. He knew then it wasn't a dream and that this was reality. Because he would never dream of Lan WangJi dying. He didn't have a reason to dream about Lan WangJi at all, especially something so dark! Granted, his dreams were usually very dark, but its not like he can control them. And, plus. It doesn't bother him and when he wakes up before the sun. Theres always a respect he has for the silence of his room and no chatter. No smile on his face, no laugh needing to be let out, no jokes, no words. Nothing, just him being present within four walls.

He looked over at Wei WuXian, the man who was him from the future. The man who had just tried to kill him. Wei Ying already hated the future. The moment he had seen Wei WuXian and learned who he was, Wei Ying knew the future was not kind to him. He knew that he had lost too many things...too many people.

Wei WuXian and Wei Ying were human. Even they had their limits and it seemed that Wei Ying did reach his...reach his to the point that he couldn't eat, he couldn't even manage teleportation, where he broke down in front of everyone, where he curled and emptied his heart out to his brother.

Wei Ying would be lying to himself if he said he wasn't terrified of his future.

“XianXian,” Jiang Yanli smiled warmly and Wei Ying quickly grinned back at her.

“Yes, Shijie?”

“Are you alright?” She asked worriedly.

“Of course!” Wei WuXian laughed, “I’m always alright!”

He felt a gaze on him and looked towards the people of the future to see Jiang WanYin staring at him. He raised an eyebrow, “Ay? Sandu Shengshou, why are you looking at me like that?”

Jiang WanYin looked down at Wei WuXian, “Ah, nothing, nothing. Ehm, pardon me, everyone? Let’s get ready to start, I’m going to wake up ShiXiong now,”

Everyone just nodded, Wei Ying briefly feeling Jiang Yanli grip his sleeves as the needle was pulled out of Wei WuXian’s neck. Grandmaster Lan looked at Jiang WanYin, “Where should we even begin?”

“I don’t know, theres many places we can...we’d have to tackle the closest events, I suppose,” Jiang WanYin shrugged.

“What about the Sunshot campaign?” Jin Ling suggested, “That’ll cover just about all the closest events,”

“Shi...di?” A tired groan filled the room and everyone quickly fell into silence.

Jiang WanYin glanced down to see Wei WuXian staring up at him. He smiled, “You’re awake,”

“Shidi...I had a very strange dream,” Wei WuXian held his head, “I saw shijie a-and Jin ZiXuan and...your parents...Q-qing Jie was alive- and there, s-she was- Wen Ning too, before I was too late- a-and...Huaisang and his brother- A-and us! Before...before...before everything! W-we were so tiny and so pure...” he paused and then mumbled, “I saw Lan Zhan too, but he was also tiny...but then I saw- saw-”

“Enough,” Jiang WanYin stopped him, “ShiXiong, breathe and drink the tea beside the seat,”

Ouyang Zizhen cleared his throat, “And...Senior Wei, I don’t think it was a dream,”

Wei WuXian blinked and then shot up a hand covering the place the needle had just been. He looked very unsettled and set his eyes on Wen Qing, “Don’t do that ever again,”

Wen Qing sighed, “My apologies, but you were in emotional disarray,”

“I’m always in emotional disarray,” Wei WuXian deadpanned and then sat properly.

He then looked at Wei Ying, “Little me,”

“Please dont choke me again,” Wei Ying quickly said, “That hurt,”

Wei WuXian raised an eyebrow, “That hurt? You’ll go through w- ow!”

“Shixiong, patience,” Jiang WanYin sighed, “We’ve already thrown too much information without warning,”

Wei WuXian couldn’t help but roll his eyes, “Its not like we got any warnings either,”

“Okay, I’m going to say it,” Jin ZiXuan looked at Wei Ying, “You’re a bitch in the future,”

Wei Ying glared, “And you’re a bitch now,”

“Wei WuXian!”

“Jin ZiXuan!”

Both Madam Yu and Madam Jin scolded with a sharp snap.

Wei WuXian looked at his younger self, “Didn’t I tell you to leave him alone? He’s actually not that bad-” he paused and then frowned, “No, I take that back. At this age, young master Jin is still a jerk,”

“I was better right?” Jin Ling asked.

Wei WuXian looked at Jin Ling and with complete seriousness he said, “No, you were like a mixture of your uncle and your father. All their faults and none of your mothers strengths! I’m more than pleased I tinkered with you and taught you things,”

“WHAT?!” Four voices screamed at him in disbelief (Jin ZiXuan, Jin Ling, and both versions of the youngest Jiang).

Wei WuXian gave them all a glare to prove his point. He then cleared his throat and huffed, “Alright, where are we going to start by showing the incoming doom?”

“We were talking about that before you woke up,” Jiang Fengmian informed with a small smile.

Wei WuXian blinked and then rubbed his head. He then began, “Well, it depends on you all from the past I suppose. What do you want to see? Would you like to see the big events or the entire two decades-”

“Don’t you mean three?” Lan Xichen said politely.

There was a blink and Wei WuXian cleared his throat, “For me it was only 20 years, I was not exactly present for 13 years,”

“Ay, why not?” Nie Huaisang frowned.

Lan JingYi suggested and ended the conversation quickly, “Let’s start with the siege,”

“What?” Jiang WanYin looked at the Lan taken aback, “Why would we start there? That happened after almost everything!”

“Exactly,” Lan JingYi grinned, “Plus, I’m sure senior, young master Wei would like to know his future and since it is technically the most relevant, shouldn’t we just show it?”

“JingYi, my sweet problem child who is nothing like a Lan,” Wei WuXian exhaled, earning an offended squawk and three giggles, “I think the siege will scare everyone,”

“Actually, I think JingYi has the right idea,” Grandmaster Lan suddenly spoke up and the other people from the future whipped their heads to stare at him in shock.

Lan JingYi gasped the loudest, “Did you all hear that?”

“Did you just say JingYi has the right idea?” Jiang WanYin raised an eyebrow.

Ouyang Zizhen saw the confusion of the past and decided to present, “JingYi is Senior Wei...if he were born in the Lan Sect,”

Everyone from the past, including Lan Qiren, felt shocked. Wei Ying burst into laughter as Lan Qiren sputtered, “WHAT?! How could-”

“Don’t,” Grandmaster Lan stopped his younger self with a tired sigh, “It’s who he is, but he is quite skilled,”

Nie Huaisang couldn’t help but ask, “Does that mean JingYi has tried alcohol?”

“Oh, he has,” Jin Ling suddenly snickered.

“Lan’s can’t remember what they do when drunk,” Lan JingYi informed dramatically, “I learnt the hard way,”

“Can you manage alcohol?” Nie MingJue was startled knowing how awful Lan Xichen’s tolerance was.

“He’s a Lan version of young master Wei without the alcohol tolerance,” Ouyang Zizhen snorted.

“Actually, for a Lan, JingYi’s tolerance is wonderful,” Lan SiZhui said, “He can manage five cups,”

Wei Ying choked, “Five cups?!”

“How- how many cups can a normal Lan manage then?!” Jiang Cheng looked slapped.

“1,” Jiang Fengmian informed with a small smile, recalling Qingheng Jun and their childhood.

The young masters all gaped in shock. Yu ZiYuan and Madam Jin rolled their eyes at the conversation. Wei Ying suddenly stood up and looked at Lan WangJi with a shit eating grin, “Lan Zhan...I have a very big urge to give you alcohol,”

“Alcohol is forbidden-”

Wei WuXian suddenly beamed, “Little me, you should definitely get Second Young Master Lan drunk!”

“Absolutely not!” Lan Qiren yelled.

“Ah, Master Lan, see, here's where it's a yes,” Wei WuXian looked more alive and similar to his past than he had the entire time, everyone from the future going absolutely still and watching him with utmost attention and barely concealed awe and affection, “Your nephew is the best person when drunk. Trust me, I would know. I've made my Lan Zhan drunk so many times and each time it's the cutest!!”

Wei Ying's eyes lit up and Lan WangJi's ears turned red at the sentence and the words *my Lan Zhan*, “What?!”

Wei WuXian stood up and began to move, face bright with a grin and completely oblivious to the pure glee and surprise on the other boys from the future. He began to explain, “Yes, yes! Ah! Young Master Lan, you've probably never seen it, but your brother is just the best thing when drunk! He's like a really exhausted bunny rabbit!!!!”

“Ridiculous!!” Lan WangJi yelled as Lan Xichen burst into laughter at his side, “Brother!!”

“I- I- I'm sorry, you're right. This should not be funny at all,” Lan Xichen tried to fix himself but he made eye contact with Wei Ying and both of them burst into laughter.

“Enough!!” Lan Qiren bellowed, “Yiling Patriarch stop trying to encourage Wei WuXian into tainting my nephew!!”

There it was.

Wei WuXian froze, eyes widening in surprise and smile fading. Lan WangJi suddenly wanted the other to talk about his drunk habits again, “W- Yiling Patriarch...?”

“You idiot!” Grandmaster Lan had suddenly hit Lan Qiren over the head with his hand.

Everyone’s jaw dropped in shock, Wei WuXian also jolting in surprise as Jiang WanYin made them sit back down again. Lan Qiren hissed, “What was that?”

“You- you- listen very carefully,” Grandmaster Lan glared at them, “You too Madam Yu!”

Madam Yu raised an eyebrow, but listened nonetheless.

Grandmaster Lan inhaled and then motioned the young Wei Ying close. The boy, very hesitantly, stood up and walked over, not able to stop himself from gaping as a gentle hand was placed on his head, hair ruffled. His eyes widened and without any control he choked out, “Gr-grandmaster?”

Grandmaster Lan sighed, looking down at the young boy. He then looked up at the people of the past, eyes narrowed, “You all have failed this boy over and over again, minus Maiden Jiang and WangJi,”

Everyone in the room jolted, Wei WuXian looking up at his uncle surprised, “U-uncle?”

Grandmaster Lan looked at him and smiled, placing a hand on the future Wei WuXian’s shoulder. He moved his hand from Wei Ying’s head to his shoulder, “I do not know...how many times I can think back on the little bits of A-Xian’s life I am aware of. I have my own actions, actions which are horrible and almost inhumane. Actions that not only started when everyone in this room had either been turned or pushed away from Wei WuXian, but even during the lectures,”

“Turned...and...pushed away...” Nie Huaisang repeated.

Grandmaster Lan made pointed looks at the Jiang adults and his old self, “For the blood that runs in his veins and the surname he bears, he has gone through hell and back and out of everyone in this room, the entire cultivation world if I dare say, he is the only person who has a heart of yang,”

Everyone was openly gaping, Wei WuXian already had silent tears falling and Wei Ying had gone stiff, looking at the man with wide eyes. Grandmaster Lan sighed and spat, “For being born from CangSe Sanren-” he took horrible notice of the way four bodies stiffened.

His younger self, the two Jiang adults, and Wei Ying himself.

“For a Mother he can’t even remember the face of, he has been singled out, used as a place for a whip to mark his body, for grief to be emptied, for punches to be thrown, for lectures and punishments to be spat on!!”

Wei Ying stepped back quickly, eyes wide and face paled, “You- how-”

“Whips? Grief? Punches?” Nie MingJue repeated, turning, “Sect Leader Jiang, Madam Yu, I can have an explanation, can I not?”

The two did not answer, staring at Grandmaster Lan. Wei WuXian felt the tension and inhaled sharply, “Uncle, stop it. Words are words, but blood is blood. I am my mothers child, I am my fathers son. I will always be the son of a servant and a trouble maker,”

Jiang WanYin sighed as Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli both startled at the words. Wei Ying nodded, agreeing right away, “Yes, yes! Big me is right. I’m just the senior disciples and the son of a servant,”

And for a few moments, Grandmaster Lan looked at Wei Ying with undisclosed horror. The people of the past saw horrible sorrow on Jiang WanYin’s face and shock on the four juniors. They all heard Ouyang Zizhen whisper, “Already? Isn’t he only like 16?”

Grandmaster Lan shook his head, “So you’re already like this?”

Wei Ying tilted his head, “Like what?”

Wei WuXian cleared his throat, “AHEM! Aren’t we supposed to be showing something right now?”

Wei Ying took the chance to return back to his seat, Jiang Yanli holding him softly. Grandmaster Lan also sat down, looking at his younger self and ordering his nephews, “WangJi, Xichen, keep track of the amount of rules broken by the Elders, me, you both, and anyone else from the Lan Sect,”

The two of them shared a glance, but nodded. Wei WuXian took a sip of his tea and suggested, “I think we should do the Sunshot Campaign and the events leading up to it. But, JingYi’s analysis is correct. As I am unintentionally in the center of just about everything,” he rolls his eyes and speaks with exhaustion, “We should show what happened to me and briefly explain how I’m in this body rather than *that* one,”

“Alright...but theres one thing I want to try,” Jiang WanYin agreed, “...and it might work, but it also might not work,”

The blank looks he received made him groan. He then, very hesitantly, because this was absolutely not something he had been thinking about when creating the array, reached into his sleeve. He pulled a couple pieces of paper and handed it to his brother. Wei WuXian took them very slowly, placing his cup down and opening them.

He then scanned the first page and his eyes widened, “Wow!! You guys worked hard on this array!!”

“What is it?” Wen Qing asked.

“The notes for the array that brought us all here,” Wei WuXian informed and then looked at the other pages, and at once his complexion paled, “...what?”

He looked at Jiang Wanyin, “What- what is this? How- how did-?”

“I don’t know if it’ll work,” Jiang WanYin confessed, “And I *hadn’t* planned on using it, but since you’re here anyway...”

Wei WuXian stopped him, standing up, “No- no- Jiang Cheng- Jiang Wanyin- Shidi- you’re a genius!! Oh my goodness, I love you so much Shidi!!”

Jiang WanYin stared at him in surprise as his brother's sudden declaration of affection, not noticing the way their younger selves gaped and flustered. They had NEVER said those words to one another.

Wei WuXian hugged Jiang WanYin tight, repeating the phrase five times before releasing and suddenly scrambling forward, looking at the notes. His one hand glowed red and he waved his wrist, the array lighting up, but not activating. Instead, it just showed the strokes. Wei WuXian looked around on the ground and promptly dropped to the floor, spreading the notes out around. Curiously, the people behind him, who happened to be Jin ZiXuan and Nie Huaisang peered at the notes, eyebrows furrowing with confusion.

“This could work! This might work!” Wei WuXian sputtered and began to ramble like he used to, “The array only pulls in our souls, not our bodies. And this is supported by the fact that half of the bodies here are powdered dust,”

Jiang WanYin spoke out carefully, “ShiXiong, this will only find his soul...”

“I know, it doesn't matter,” Wei WuXian brushed away, standing up and running to his younger self. He then pulled out Suiban and brought it with him, returning to the ground. Everyone watched with disbelief as Wei WuXian(a couple alarmed yelps sounded), without hesitating, made multiple slits on his palm and began to draw, the first array vanishing out of sight again, “The array that brought us here completely eradicates our future,”

“Yeah, so?” Jin Ling frowned

Wei WuXian spoke as he worked, “Since after we finish our duty here, we’ll all disappear. Our souls will vanish and never be born again if the people from the past manage to change the future and fix it. In hence, we’re like ghosts of time that have a mission and will pass on once that mission is complete,”

Wei Ying looked at the array on the ground and then gasped, “You’re calling another soul in here?”

“Who?” Lan Qiren frowned.

“Lan WangJi,” Jiang WanYin announced and suddenly, the four juniors shot over grabbing the notes and reading them. At once, they began to overlap in conversation and everyone watched with respect as Wei WuXian answered without pause. The juniors slit their own palms, helping in drawing out the array.

“But Second Young Master Lan is already here,” Jiang Fengmian pointed out.

“Not him,” Lan JingYi shook his head, “The one you all just saw before Young Master Wei almost got strangled by Senior Wei,”

Yu ZiYuan looked at the future version of her son after seeing the complicated array being painted and seeing as it looked almost completed, “You made this?”

“It was a theory,” Jiang WanYin looked down, “If it doesn’t work...”

“It will work,” Wei WuXian replied firmly, “We’re only calling a soul and I have Lan Zhan’s forehead ribbon in my hair. Every disciple of the Lan sect has one ribbon for life and is

taught the importance of it the moment they can understand. The ribbon is closely related to him and it was the last thing he brought up before...”

The rest of the sentence was finished silently, but then multiple gasps and chokes lit up the room as they caught the stuff about the forehead ribbon. Jin ZiXuan gaped, “Oh my God...Wei WuXian and..Lan WangJi?!”

“Why would I have the forehead ribbon?” Wei WuXian blinked lost, “Lan Zhan almost killed me when I was going to poke it for fun,”

“You don't know what it means?!” Madam Jin looked at him.

“Should I...?”

Lan Qiren exhaled a suffering sigh, Lan Xichen snickered amused, and Lan WangJi's ears burned.

“Done!” Ouyang Zizhen stood up and the Wen Siblings moved forward and checked the wounds.

Jiang Cheng scowled, “Why would you use blood to draw the array?”

“Blood is the best for drawing an array!” Wei WuXian informed, “Almost all my inventions are tested and drawn with my blood,”

“Speaking of blood,” Lan SiZhui looked at the notes and then Lan WangJi, “Second Young Master Lan, we need a drop of your blood in the center to further enhance the chance this will work,”

Lan WangJi didn't move, but everyone stared at him. He looked at the future version of Wei WuXian and recalled how broken he looked before. Sucking in a breath, he stood up,

ignoring Lan Qiren's yell of protest. He then picked up Suiban and made a small prick on his index finger. Everyone backed up from the array, Lan Wangji carefully leaning over and dropping a few droplets into the center. The array glowed to life with blue spiritual energy and Lan Wangji quickly stumbled back, wordlessly throwing the sword towards Wei Ying, who caught it.

Everyone in the room watched withheld breaths as the blue glowed brighter and the faint outline of particles began to show. The smell of sandalwood began to waft through the room strongly and Wei WuXian gripped his brother's sleeve tightly, the younger praying under his breath. The light became blinding and everyone closed their eyes as spiritual energy burst out into the space they were in.

Feeling it fade, they all turned back and opened their eyes, blinking a few times. Wei WuXian's heart thumped loudly as he saw a very familiar face, dressed in white robes of the GusuLan Sect, the only exception being the forehead ribbon missing. For a few seconds everyone froze in silence at the unmoving male standing where the array had been.

His eyes then flew open, revealing gold, and the man looked completely caught off guard glancing around the room. Grandmaster Lan stepped forward seeing the cultivator hold his head and blink lost, trying to focus his eyesight. He slowly reached out and placed a hand against the boy's shoulder, everyone's eyes widening as it made contact firmly, "...Wangji?"

(Future LWJ is Lan Wangji. Past LWJ is Lan Zhan)

Lan Wangji glanced up towards his uncle, "Uncle?"

Wei WuXian choked and he looked at his brother, eyes shimmering in tears, "Shidi..."

The white-robed cultivator spun towards the noise, eyes widening, "Wei...Ying?"

Wei WuXian looked at him, whispering back, words coated in disbelief and love and pain, "Lan Zhan..."

Lan WangJi blinked and then everyone saw the placid face turn into one of fear, “Wait- why? What happened? Didn't I die? How-”

He stopped as Wei WuXian shot forward and jumped at him, arms wrapping around his neck. Lan WangJi caught him easily, holding the shorter firmly as he heard soft sobs and whimpers. His eyes softened and he slowly adjusted his grip, “Wei Ying, I'm here,”

“You're here...you're here!!” Wei WuXian repeated, “Lan Zhan, my Lan Zhan, Hanguang Jun, ” he then pulled back and cupped the other's face, the two completely oblivious to the shocked people of the past and the very startled and red faced Lan Zhan and Wei Ying.

He cried and Lan WangJi smiled softly, reaching up and wiping the tears with one hand. He took one of Wei WuXian's hands and placed it over his heart. Wei WuXian felt the steady thumps and choked, “L-Lan Zh-Zhan!!!!”

“Mn, I'm here. I'm here, ” Lan WangJi shoved away questions, pulling Wei WuXian close again.

They stood there, in the center of the room embracing tightly and Wei WuXian choking and gasping for air as he stopped crying. Jiang Wanyin smiled brightly, tears shimmering in the corner of his eyes. He inhaled and laughed, “It really worked...”

“Jiujiu, you did it!!” Jin Ling cheered, “Jiujiu, your array really worked!!!”

Lan WangJi looked up towards his brother in law. He then smiled at him, Jiang Wanyin just smiling back. Lan WangJi tightened his grip, and then not able to resist any longer and he pulled back and connected his lips to his husband's, Wei WuXian responding easily, hugging the other's neck tightly. Their lips clashed and were desperate against one another, Wei WuXian sobbing softly and smiling in between.

Multiple choking sounds and faces lit up like red lanterns.

“WHAT THE FUCK?!?”

At once, they were snapped out of the daze, and the two faces looked at Wei Ying, who's face seemed a mixture of disbelief and embarrassment. Lan WangJi startled, “Wei...Ying?”

“A-ah...” Wei WuXian stuttered, wiping tears softly from his cheeks and remembering the situation, but did not step back, “Yes...er...Lan Zhan...we are sort of in a situation,”

Lan WangJi had not torn his gaze from Wei Ying, who was staring right back. Jiang Cheng lost it and burst, “Wei WuXian and Second Young Master Lan are husbands?!?!?”

Lan WangJi looked at him and his expression turned even more lost. Then slowly, he looked around the entire room and instinctively brought Wei WuXian closer, stepping back towards the direction of Jiang WanYin and Grandmaster Lan, “Wei Ying, what's going on?”

Wei WuXian smiled awkwardly and Jiang Wanyin waved his hand, sitting down in a new seat. Wei WuXian explained, “It's Uncle, Jiang Cheng, sect mistress Jin, problem child, lover boy, and our radish's fault,”

The juniors couldn't help but groan in fondness at the nicknames. Lan WangJi looked at them and then sucked in a breath, “A-Yuan...”

Lan SiZhui, who had been very quiet while controlling his tears, choked slightly at the call. Wei WuXian turned to him and smiled softly. Lan WangJi also understood and spoke fondly, “A-Yuan, come here,”

Lan Xichen was amazed. He glanced at his brother beside him and the future version. The older version of his brother was so expressive. Lan Xichen had never seen his brother act the way he was now.

Lan SiZhui ran forward, gripping Lan WangJi and gripping Wei WuXian with one hand each, hugging them both tightly, “A-Die! Baba!”

Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian both practically melted, hugging their son and Wei WuXian speaking softly to calm him down. Lan WangJi rubbing up and down Lan SiZhui's back and glanced at Grandmaster Lan, "What happened?"

Pulling back, Wei WuXian guided his husband to a seat. The family of three sat down, Lan WangJi in the center, one arm around his husband's waist and the other holding his son's hand. Then, came the explanation.

To say he was shocked, would be an understatement. The people from the past, as he had been told, remained silent just openly staring at the three white robed males. Only after was the explanation finished did Lan WangJi look towards his son, "So...this was your idea?"

Lan SiZhui smiled sheepishly, "Yes, Baba,"

"But...why?" Lan WangJi did not understand, "Everything was wonderful,"

Wei WuXian glared at his husband, "Yes, it was wonderful before you were stupid and decided to kill the damned curse at the cost of your life!!!"

He gave a weak smack on the male's chest, before face dropping into pain, "Why...why?"

Lan WangJi really didn't have an answer, so he just pulled the other closer, "More people could've died had I not taken that chance, my love,"

Wei Ying sqawked again, face turned a light red, "It's official. I believe I'm dreaming or have finally gone insane! Madam Yu, you were correct, I've gotten myself in some situation and I don't know how to get out!"

Yu ZiYuan let out a snort of amusement, looking at her son with curiosity only to see him just as in denial as Wei Ying seems to be.

Lan Zhan nodded in agreement, staring at the couple with a mixture of denial, confusion, anger, and embarrassment, “I believe we’ve been cursed,”

Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi sighed, the older mumbling, “They don’t know yet?”

“Lan Zhan, your young self hasn't even realized he’s in love with me yet and me...” he tilted his head, “I'm a hopeless case,”

Lan WangJi shook his head amused and looked towards Jiang WanYin, “Wanyin, thank you,”

Jiang WanYin smiled and then cleared his throat, “Even though we know who you are, I believe you should formally introduce yourself,”

Lan WangJi nodded, bowing with his head and torso since he refused to release the hold on his family, “Lan Zhan, courtesy WangJi of the GusuLan Sect. Title Hanguang Jun or Chief Cultivator,”

“Chief cultivator?” Jin ZiXuan said astonished and looked at the younger Lan Zhan, “Congratulations!”

Lan Zhan snapped out of his gaze and bowed his head. He then looked at himself with conflicting eyes. Lan WangJi saw him and gave him a look of understanding, “My change did not come without a price,” His eyes softened into pain and Wei WuXian’s face turned guilty and ashamed, “I lost someone, very similar to how we lost Mother,”

At that, both twin Jade’s froze. Lan Xichen sucked in a breath, glancing at Lan Zhan, who’s eyes widened and then fell to the ground with a withering glare, fingers curling into fists. Jiang Fengmian sighed, knowing the story and Lan Qiren looked at the future version of his nephew with curiosity. Lan Zhan felt his brother reach for him and did not retract from it. He glanced over at Wei Ying, who was covering his face as the Jiang siblings whispered constantly to him.

'Lost like Mother...so I lost him,' Lan Zhan understood. There was only one person he knew who reminded him and brought out his emotions like his Mother had. And that was the senior disciple he was apparently in love with.

Lan Zhan finally asked, "What happened in the future?"

The question was said loudly to get everyone's attention again, eyes falling on the people of the future. Grandmaster Lan cleared his throat, "Well, since we spoke before...we would be showing a brief explanation of why A-Xian-" Lan WangJi grunted in shock, staring at his Uncle in disbelief, he then turned to his husband, who smiled and whispered softly explaining.

Grandmaster Lan smiled at his nephew when seeing the interaction and continued, "Why A-Xian is in the body he is in now, rather than the body Young Master Wei is in,"

Lan JingYi smiled, "And then we can answer questions, because I can already think there will be a lot,"

Everyone from the past nodded. Jiang WanYin turned to his brother, "Do you want to do the honor or-"

"I am not moving from my husbands side, thank you very much my wonderful baby brother," Wei WuXian cut him off.

"I think I'm going to faint," Wei Ying muttered under his breath and Jiang Yanli quickly grabbed him and giggled, "XianXian, its alright. Shijie will make sure you have a wonderful marriage, no matter boy or girl!"

Wei Ying looked at her and smiled softly. Wei WuXian tore his eyes from the interaction and watched as Lan JingYi waved his hand which glowed blue and the array activated. And that's when they all saw it. Instead of last time where it started almost at once, the array crackled and Wei WuXian stiffened, "Uh oh..."

“Is that...” Madam Jin saw the few black and red tendrils before the array burst and started up again.

Lan WangJi automatically looked at his husband who glanced at him worriedly, “I don’t know how it’ll affect it. I didn’t make this,”

Jiang WanYin sucked in a breath as the scenery changed and the black void fell away into something almost as dark except for the fire bowls and colors of brightly covered robes and the full moon. Wei WuXian sucked in a harsh breath, Lan WangJi hardening his eyes at the scenery with a glare. The people of the past made multiple sounds, some of confusion, others of shock. Nie Huaisang fanned himself and looked at Jin ZiXuan, “Where is this? And why are the great sects and a couple of minor ones gathered here?”

“This is Nightless City,” Wen Qing informed with a deep frown, “Right outside the Sun Palace,”

Before anyone could ask more, the scene shifted and a sudden sound rang through the room. Everyone blinked as the intense sound of instruments and drums rang through the room. Grandmaster Lan narrowed his eyes, “Is that music?”

Wei WuXian nodded, “This is music, but there wasn't music last time,”

The scene zoomed in to show a man in golden robes standing in front of a few familiar faces. At his side was a boy also in gold robes, but with a brown hat on his head.

“Who is that boy beside Father?” Jin ZiXuan frowned.

“Jin Guangyao,” Hateful voices answered.

Madam Jin narrowed her eyes in disdain, already realizing. Jin ZiXuan also understood, sighing helplessly.

Jin Guangshan looked towards the people behind him and suddenly threw a vase up, causing it to explode and ashes to be scattered.

Wei WuXian anger spiked and he narrowed his eyes, “HE-”

“Wei Ying,” Lan WangJi spoke softly, “This has happened, you cannot change anything right now,”

Wei WuXian sulked and nodded, “I know...”

“What was that?” Nie MingJue asked.

He got his answer as Jin Guangshan spoke out.

“With the scattered ashes of the Ghost General and Wen Qing, we will begin our alliance and siege the Burial Mounds and kill off the remaining Wen Remnants! Then, we can rid the world of the demon and scatter the ashes of the Yiling Patriarch, Wei WuXian!”

Everyone in the room snapped their eyes towards the two Wen siblings who froze. Wen Ning suddenly yelped, “JIEJIE!”

Wen Qing looked pale, “What?”

Grandmaster Lan smiled helplessly, “To be frank, Lady Wen, you and A-Xian are very close,”

Wei Ying blurted out, “Why am I a demon?! Why are they trying to kill me?!”

No one answered him and Wei Ying stiffened in fear.

Dark laughter rang out and they watched as the cultivators spun to look towards the roof of the Sun Palace. A figure was seated at the top of the roof, leaning back casually. This figure was dressed in black and red, a black flute with a red tassel and a red ribbon standing out against his hair.

“Is that... Young Master Wei?” Lan Xichen’s eyes widened.

“Why do you look so much older?” Jiang Cheng frowned, “I saw myself, and I look basically the same,”

Jiang WanYin and Lan WangJi both flinched slightly, Wei WuXian chuckling lightly.

“I’ll spare you the time,” Wei WuXian looked down at the group with silver eyes filled with anger and barely hidden betrayal, “Sect Leader Jin, you truly are what people say you are? Who’s the man who said everything would be dropped if Wen Qing and Wen Ning surrender? And yet- now you talk and rally and swear an oath to storm my home and kill my family? Ahahaha!!”

“A-Ning?!”

“I’ll explain later,” Wei WuXian promised.

The music started louder and the scene seemed to have progressed forward, because Wei WuXian was suddenly on his feet with an arrow through his chest. They all saw the multiple weapons pointed at him and the barely held back tears of frustration. They watched as Wei WuXian’s eyes turned red and he pulled out the arrow without hesitation and black tendrils cleaned off the blood. He smirked wickedly and threw it. The arrow flew down with accuracy and impaled a disciple’s heart, killing him.

Wei Ying froze and everyone yelped in shock.

“What the hell is going on?!”

“Believe me, I know. I’ve sunk pretty low,”

Wei WuXian choked, “I’m singing?!”

“This did not happen before,” Ouyang Zizhen muttered, but he was still angry and taken aback by the events from the scene before.

The scene sped up again and Wei WuXian was playing the flute and a battle was raging below him as the cultivators began to attack corpses and black tendrils.

“Resentment?!” Lan Qiren seethed, “Wei WuXian, you’re a demonic cultivator!?”

Another figure landed on the rooftop, draped in white and with gold eyes. Wei WuXian turned to him, eyes turned more filled with anger and hurt.

“But whatever I’ve done, you deserve,”

“Wei Ying!”

“QUIET!”

“I’m so confused!!!” Nie Huaisang held his head.

“I’m the bad guy, that’s fine!”

“A-Xian!”

Wei WuXian froze, anger vanishing into shock, “Shijie?!”

“A-Li!! Why are you in a place like this?!” Yu ZiYuan screamed in horror.

Jiang Yanli blinked and then thought. She looked at her future brothers, “If the sects are trying to kill A-Xian, I probably went to find him,”

“If the sects want to kill me, let them kill me!” Wei YIng looked at her fear, “Shijie! Promise me to never run into battle for me!! You being safe is enough!!”

“XianXian, I can’t-”

“SHIJIE!!!!”

They looked towards the scene to see Wei WuXian running through the battle now, eyes wide with fear.

“A-JIE!!”

They all watched with shock as Jiang Yanli was being cradled by Jiang Cheng as Wei WuXian ran towards them, crouching down. But then, Jiang Cheng shoved him back, “You said you could control them?!”

“But its no fault of mine,”

“It wasn’t me!! I didn’t- they’re not listening!!” Wei WuXian spoke helplessly.

**“A-Xian,” Jiang Yanli said weakly and Wei WuXian scamrbled closer to her again,
“Shijie, Shijie!”**

**“You...you ran so fast, shijie couldn’t- shijie couldn’t look at you properly,” Jiang Yanli
smiled lovingly, reaching up and touching Wei WuXian’s cheek.**

**And there it was, the moment she touched him a few tears fell. She begged, “A-
Xian...stop this...”**

**“Okay, okay, I’ll stop!” Wei WuXian agreed, eyes returning to silver and he played his
flute quickly, the battle quieting around them. He smiled, “Done, I stopped. I stopped,”**

Wei WuXian whimpered, turning away and hiding his face in Lan WangJi’s shoulder, Jiang
WanYin closing his eyes painfully. Just by seeing their reaction, everyone could realize what
was coming. Wei Ying and Jiang Cheng both stiffened in fear.

**“A-Xian, I don’t...I don’t-” her eyes shifted and she yelled in alarm, shoving Wei
WuXian away, “Look out!!”**

“SHIJIE!!!!” Wei Ying shot up with horror as the sword impaled his sisters chest.

“JIE!!!!!!”

“A-LI!!!!!!”

Jiang Yanli sucked in a breath, quickly adjusting so she was in the center of the seat and pulled both her brothers close, both of them gripping her like their lives depended on it.

Wei WuXian and Jiang Cheng on the screen both gasped horrified as Jiang Yanli's body went limp, and they watched as Wei WuXian's horrified eyes turned red and he screamed, resentment exploding from him and his body lurching up with a metal object glowing from his chest.

“And some justice at last shall be served,”

The scene faded showing Wei WuXian seated dazed in a room built of stone. In the entrance, they saw an old woman staring at him with sorrow, before sighing and leaving. But not without saying, “A-Ying, please eat...”

“Now its time to step up, or its time to step down,”

“Granny?” Wen Qing and Wen Ning repeated, astounded.

“Ah, my home,” Wei WuXian had raised his head again.

Wei WuXian closed his eyes and walked out of the cave to show a collection of elderly and disabled people trying to farm. He stood watching them with pain.

“And there's only one answer for me,”

“Uncle Four? Uncle Six?” Wen Ning stuttered in disbelief.

“Why are all those elderly farming?” Nie MingJue frowned in disbelief.

Wei WuXian let out a deep sigh.

Wei WuXian pulled out something from his robes, an intricate stone the size of his palm with a red tassel. His eyes narrowed in determination and he tightened his grip.

“And I’ll stand up and fight, cause I know that I’m right!”

“And you were,” Jin Ling agreed solemnly, finally out of the daze of seeing his mother’s death.

“You were the only one who was right,” Lan JingYi sighed.

“And I’m ready, I’m ready, I’m ready!”

The eyes turned red and Wei WuXian entered his cave. Then with a loud yell of anger, he snapped the amulet into two halves, blood trickling from his hands and lips and nose, resentment smashing against his body. Wei WuXian spat out blood, but his face was determined.

“Ready as I’ll ever be,”

The scene changed again with the music to show Jiang Cheng standing in front of a bunch of sect leaders, eyes mad with rage and grief.

“ Now its time to rise up”

“Ah, now Sandu Shengshou is singing,” Nie Huaisang muttered.

“Or its time to back down,”

Jiang Cheng looked down towards the silver bell on his waist, closing his eyes. They heard Wei WuXian's voice sound from somewhere, "In the future, when you're sect leader, I'll be your subordinate! Just like your father and mine. Gusu has the Twin Jades, Yunmeng can have us, the Twin Prides!!"

Jiang Cheng's eyes widened and he looked towards Wei Ying, who looked right at him and grinned, no denying the words in the slightest. Jiang Cheng smiled a bit, turning back to the scene. But then he saw the guilt on Wei WuXian's face and Jiang WanYin's expression turning pained as he gripped his chest.

"and the answer is easy to see..."

Jiang Cheng opened his eyes and unsheathed Sandu.

"And I swear by the sword, if you're in, get on board!"

The scene shifted to show large black cliffs and practically dead terrain, shivers running down their backs.

"The Burial Mounds," Jiang Fengmian shuddered.

Wei WuXian smiled weakly, thinking, *'Home,'*

They watched as an army of multiple sects burst into the Burial Mounds and blood was beginning to shed as corpses attacked them. Jiang Cheng and the Sect leaders beside him all looked towards a figure in black, staring down at them with undisclosed disgust.

"Are you ready?"

Jiang Cheng pointed Sandu up at Wei WuXian, the male's eyes widened a fraction.

“WHAT?!” Jiang Cheng exclaimed.

Lan Zhan looked at the future Jiang Wanyin, “You led a siege on Wei Ying?!”

Jiang WanYin inhaled and nodded, “Yes, I did,”

Lan WangJi glanced at his son to see anger dancing in those eyes. He reached out and stroked his head, “A-Yuan, if you cannot watch. Do not...”

“Lan zhan, that goes for you too,” Wei WuXian looked at his husband.

Nie MingJue raised Baxia, glaring at Wei WuXian, “*I’m ready!*”

Lan Xichen unsheathed his own sword, staring at Wei WuXian with frustration and anger, “*I’m ready!*”

Wei Ying gulped seeing this, risking a glance at both of them, to see confusion in both their expressions.

Wei WuXian's eyes turned red and the corpses attacked, a fight raging on as Jiang Cheng cut and slashed, making his way towards the unmoving figure watching him.

“We’re Ready!”

Wen Qing and Wen Ning screamed out loud as they watched their family getting killed, bodies of the defenseless littering the ground. Nie MingJue, Lan Xichen, and Jiang Cheng all froze, eyes widening with guilt and horror.

“We- we wouldn’t...” Lan Xichen muttered.

“Yes, you would,” Lan Wangji looked at the past version of his brother, tone having a slight edge, “And you did,”

“We’re Ready!!”

The scene zeroed in on Jiang Cheng again, his eyes brimmed with tears of betrayal and anger, Sandu pointed straight at Wei WuXian, who stared right back at Jiang Cheng with red eyes and a soft smile, listened as Jiang Cheng spoke, “*Ready as I’ll ever be...*”

Jiang Cheng roared in rage, “I WOULD NOT FIGHT HIM!!”

“Sit your ass down!” Jiang Wanyin snapped and Jiang Cheng did as told glaring and spitting, “You’re insane!! Why would I attack Wei WuXian?!”

Wei WuXian smiled a bit but did not answer properly, “You’ll see,”

“Hey, the scene’s super different!” Jin Zixuan pointed out.

The scene was showing a male in Nie Sect robes fanning himself. He was scanning some papers on the desk, while another boy stood in front of him. Everyone recognized the face at once.

“That’s me?!” Wei Ying exclaimed

“No,” Grandmaster Lan shook his head, “This is the original owner of your new body, Mo XuanYu,”

“Why is he with Huaisang?” Nie MingJue frowned.

“Are you quite sure we can do this?”

Mo XuanYu had sung this time, Nie Huaisang glancing up at him with a calm smile, holding up a few papers and handing them to the boy.

“Together, we will guarantee,”

Multiple sounds of understanding sounded from the future people. Lan SiZhui spoke, “So that’s how Mo XuanYu got the ritual!”

“Huaisang gave it to him,” Jiang WanYin smiled, “That means Huaisang must’ve asked specifically for Mo XuanYu to summon ShiXiong,”

The scene changed again back to the siege, Wei WuXian playing loudly as corpses attacked, all while he watched the purple robes of Jiang Cheng get closer to him.

“I’ll make them hear me!”

The scene shifted once more and this time, they saw Mo XuanYu again. He was an awfully maintained room, arms bleeding and fingers making wild strokes with blood on the ground.

“Now its time to redeem,”

The scene showed Nie Huaisang walking into Koi Tower, smiling at a man they had seen before. The man is named, Jin GuangYao. They watched as Jin GuangYao walked with Lan Xichen, Nie Huaisang following with a glare on his face, hidden by his fan.

“Or its time to resolve,”

“Woah, Nie-xiong...you look...” Wei Ying looked at his friend who seemed also shocked with his future self.

The scene shifted again and they were back at the siege. Jiang Cheng and Wei WuXian were standing facing one another, one looking with anger, the other with a calmness. Jiang Cheng roared in rage, “Wei WuXian!!!”

He launched forward, but Wei WuXian avoided the strike, listening to Jiang Cheng yell at him.

“You liar!!”

“Traitor!!”

“Murderer!!”

“Demon!!”

Wei WuXian stepped from the sword swing and spoke carefully, “Yes, yes, I am all those, but are you not the same, Sect Leader Jiang?”

The two future brothers winced at the scene, Jin Ling frowned softly. Jiang Yanli looked pained, gently reaching out and holding both her brother’s hands, the two of them had gone stiff and pale at her sides.

“Sect Leader,” Jiang Fengmian breathed out and then smiled sadly, “I see, I’ve already passed,”

The three siblings turned paler.

They fought for a few minutes and then finally, Jiang Cheng screamed, “I HATE YOU!!!”

Wei Ying’s breathing hitched and he closed his eyes softly for a few seconds, before watching calmly. He didn’t realize the motion was caught by a certain pair of gold eyes, which suddenly narrowed in concern.

Jiang Cheng’s throat turned dry, but nothing came out.

“ *Prove they can trust me ,*” Jiang Cheng’s voice sang.

Wei WuXian’s eyes softened and he didn’t avoid the next strike, Sandu piercing straight through his chest. Jiang Cheng’s eyes widened in shock. Wei WuXian smiled, staring straight into the eyes of the male, “You finally said it, ChengCheng,”

“NO!!” Jiang Cheng screamed, “WHAT THE FUCK?!”

“A-Xian, A-Cheng,” Jiang Yanli whispered painfully.

The scene suddenly shifted to show the inside of a house and a figure weakly stumbling through, bandages wrapped around his torso. But blood was leaking through on his back as he got to the bed. The face was shown and they all froze seeing gold eyes and the familiar face of Lan WangJi.

“What?!” Lan Qiren and Lan Xichen exclaimed.

“What are those wounds?” Madam Jin demanded.

Lan WangJi informed after a small pause, “Discipline whip...33 lashes,”

Lan Zhan’s eyes widened and his brother gasped horrified. Lan Qiren looked paler than the robes, “Why would- what did-”

No answers were given to him.

“And the outcome will hardly come free,”

“Lan Zhan!” Wei WuXian smiled a bit, “Ah, even in this you sing great,”

Lan WangJi looked at him softly, “Wei Ying is best,”

Before the younger could refute, Jiang WanYin deadpanned, “You’re both amazing, moving on,”

The scene changed to show Nie Huaisang again, except this time he was kneeling in front of a couple of tablets. It was the Nie Sect Ancestral Hall and he was bowing to one in the center. The scene zoomed in to show the name as Nie Huaisang sang, *“I’ll save my home and family,”*

“DA-GE!!!” Nie Huaisang screamed, reading the name on the tablet.

“But- but- that’s impossible!” Lan Xichen frowned, “We just saw MingJue-Ge at the...”

He didn’t finish, but everyone understood. Jin Ling answered, “The stuff with the siege and my mother and Daijiu and jiujiu’s fight is happening first. The stuff with Mo XuanYu and the Nie brothers is a few years after that, specifically 13 years after the siege,”

“Let’s finish and then we can answer things, yes?” Grandmaster Lan stopped any more words from being said.

The scene shifted again to show Mo XuanYu sitting in the middle of a bloody array, face covered in terrible makeup, “*Now the lines in the sand,*”

Nie Huaisang showed up again, this time with something wrapped up. He placed it on a roof top and sang as he turned away, “*And our moment’s at hand,*”

“That was him!!” Lan JingYi exclaimed, “Sect Leader Nie was the one who brought that demonic arm to Mo Manor?!”

“Yup,” Wei WuXian nodded.

Mo XuanYu showed again, this time the array glowing with activation, “*And I’m ready,*”

The scene went back to the siege, where Jiang Cheng still had Sandu impaled in Wei WuXian. Jiang Cheng’s voice as a single tear fell down his face, “*I’m ready...*”

Wei WuXian pulled out one half of the metal trinket from before. The hand holding the flute shot forward and threw Jiang Cheng back, the flute travelling with the male as he grunted and fell quite far back.

“Oh no,” Wei WuXian froze.

Wei WuXian smiled, eyes red and resentment swirling around him and rushing into the amulet in his palm. Jiang Cheng’s eyes widened and Wei WuXian’s voice sang out, “*I’m ready...*”

There was a huge explosion of black and red and everyone heard the shrieks of wails of ghosts, along with an ear shattering scream of pain that could only belong to Wei WuXian, who was buried beneath the hundreds of ghosts and corpses that swarmed towards him.

“A-Xian!!”

“Wei WuXian!!”

“Wei-Xiong!!!”

“Wei Ying!”

The scene flashed and it showed Mo XuanYu falling to the floor laying motionless. And then his once brown eyes opened revealing a familiar silver. Wei WuXian’s voice finished the song.

“Ready as I’ll ever be,”

The array deactivated and they were back in the plain dark void, scene vanishing.

There was absolute silence and pale faces of disbelief.

Wei WuXian closed his eyes and then smiled as much as he could manage, “Any questions?”

“Yes,” Wei Ying whispered, “What the fuck did we just see?”

Lan WangJi’s voice shook with pain, “You watched the last three months of your life in that body. And then you watched Mo XuanYu perform a soul sacrifice ritual to bring you back to

life 13 years later,”

Jiang Cheng blew up, “Did you- did you actually stab him? A-and say those things?!”

Jiang WanYin blinked and then glanced over at Wei WuXian, who had glanced at him. The younger then sighed, “Yeah...27 years ago, three months after A-Jie died and her funeral had taken place, I rallied the four sects of Jiang, Lan, Nie, and Jin to the Burial Mounds to kill Wei WuXian,”

“B-but why?!” Jiang Cheng screamed in denial, getting very panicked at how calmly his brother seemed to be taking this.

“Because I hurt you,” Wei WuXian answered this time, “A lot. I never kept my promise, I defected from the sect. I killed your sister...and, caused the massacre of the entire YunmengJiang, including the death of your parents,”

Jiang WanYin snapped before anyone could process the words, “Bullshit! You did not cause the massacre nor the deaths of my parents! Don’t you fucking take the blame of that on yourself!”

“And Yiling Patriarch didn’t kill Maiden Jiang,” Jin ZiXuan frowned, “We all just saw it. She saved his life,”

“Exactly,” Wei Ying finally spoke up, eyes turning to him, “She died taking the sword for a monster who was doomed to die anyway!”

“A-Xian!!” Jiang Yanli screamed at the word *monster* .

Wei Ying frowned, “Am I wrong? That future me is dripping in resentment!! Why would you save someone like that?”

Wei WuXian began to look nervous as the atmosphere was starting to turn colder, but Wei Ying took no notice and just kept going, “Demonic cultivation is literally the dark arts. And I look insane, not to mention I literally attacked back when the sects sieged me? And if I defected from the sect, that means I walked away from any connections with Shijie and Jiang Cheng. And since I’m not actually adopted, I am just the senior disciple. Defecting means I lose my right to call Shijie, Shijie. And Jiang Cheng, Jiang Cheng. I’d have to refer to them as their official titles of Maiden and Sect Leader,”

The four Jiang’s were staring at Wei WuXian with widening eyes, including Yu ZiYuan. Nie Huaisang was frowning deeply, and Jin ZiXuan looked between the future people and Wei Ying.

“Which also brings up my point of the thing with Mo XuanYu, he must’ve been a lunatic! Who would call a demonic cultivator back from the dead for some dumb ritual! I mean, look what happened to me during that siege!” Wei Ying exclaimed, mouth never knowing when to stop, “I was literally turned into a powder by my own puppets, which isn’t too surprising. If I become a demonic cultivator, I was probably already losing my head. I joke about it, but I’m not serious about it. Demonic cultivation is a one way ticket to death. So unless I am really that desperate to just die why would I-”

“WEI YING!!” Lan WangJi finally snapped, Wei Ying freezing at the amount of hostility in the tone.

Wei WuXian looked very, very, nervous as Lan WangJi glared at his younger self, before closing his eyes and trying to breathe. Then, Wei WuXian tried to run, but Lan WangJi caught him without moving, “You are not escaping this conversation,”

“...he’s 16, Lan Zhan. That’s the teenage mindset-”

“Wei WuXian, sit your ass in the fucking chair,” Jiang WanYin growled and Wei WuXian grimaced, sitting down.

Wei Ying still hadn’t moved, but then looked at Jiang Yanli, who had eyes wide with fear. He frowned, “Okay, what the fuck did I do now?”

“Young Master Wei,” Lan JingYi frowned deeply, “Do you realize the extent of the words you’ve just spoken of your future?”

“I’m just repeating things everyone knows!” Wei Ying defended himself, “Why are you all suddenly so upset!!?”

Wei WuXian nodded, “Exactly, he’s right. Lan Zhan, **Baobei**, I love you, but that little me hasn’t gone through what I have. His words are excusable,”

“Its not excusable! Its not amusing to me hearing you, past you, or anyone else talk about how you died. Yes, it’s the mindset of the time, but that does not make the mindset correct,” Lan WangJi frowned at him, “And what about before demonic cultivation, **Airen** ? How many times have you risked your life?”

Wei WuXian looked down, “The situations before and after were different, Er-Gege,”

Lan WangJi closed his eyes and sighed, sharing a look with his son, who also looked towards Wei WuXian and Wei Ying with a sad frown. Lan WangJi pulled Wei WuXian close to him, speaking softly and Wei WuXian’s expression turned pained and then guilty, before nodding and turning to hide his face in the older’s shoulder.

Wei Ying did not understand and pursed his lips. He then swallowed and grinned brightly, “But my eyes and hair as a demonic cultivator are very cool!”

Yu ZiYuan snapped out of her shock and reminded, “You can’t do swordsmanship with that hair,”

“Then I should style my hair like that for formal events! I think I’ll look quite nice, right Shijie?” Wei Ying smiled at his sister as bright as he could.

Jiang Yanli’s expressions softened and she cleared her throat, “Yes, I think it’ll look wonderful on my XianXian,”

Jiang Cheng looked at him and then hesitantly spoke, “Wei WuXian...you know I don’t hate you, right?”

Wei Ying blinked and then smiled warmly, “You can think of me the way you like Jiang Cheng, but...I know the truth,”

Jiang Cheng smiled relieved, looking towards his Father, who seemed to have fallen into deep thought. The others had also moved on the words Wei Ying had said before, Nie MingJue asking, “You said multiple people in this room are dead, who exactly are those people?”

Ouyang Zizhen looked at Jiang WanYin for permission, the man just nodding. Ouyang Zizhen listed out, “Madam Yu and Sect Leader Jiang passed away the earliest, then Young Master Wen, but he was sort of brought back to life, we’ll explain about that later. Then Young Master Jin passed away. Couple days later, Lady Wen. Then Maiden Jiang, Young Master Wei was killed. And then a few years after Young Master Wei’s death, Sect Leader Nie suffers from Qi deviation...at one point Madam Jin passes away as well. And then, 13 years after the siege, Young Master Wei’s soul is summoned into the body of Mo XuanYu and he basically comes back to life!”

Jin ZiXuan’s eyes widened at the mention of his and his mothers death. And then he looked at Jin Ling, “...Maiden Jiang and I...did you grow up without us?”

Jin Ling smiled painfully and nodded, “JiuJiu raised me...and then after DaiJiu came to life, he helped me improve and raised me the few years of youth I had left,”

Jiang Yanli smiled, “Thats nice, I’m glad A-Cheng and A-Xian are there for you,”

Jin Ling grinned brightly, “They’re the best!! And JiuMa is-”

“A-Ling!!!” Jiang WanYin shrieked, but the damage was done.

“JIUMA?!” Jiang Yanli and Wei Ying exclaimed.

Jiang Cheng went red at their side, and Wei Ying smirked, “Would you look at that...Jiang Cheng, you got yourself a wife!!”

“SHUT UP!!” Jiang Cheng screamed, “You’re married as well and your future husband is sitting right next to you!!”

Wei Ying and Lan Zhan both turned red, refusing to look at one another. Wei WuXian grinned, “Ah, the past few years have been really peaceful and I’ve seen the birth of many children and heirs and been to marriages. Shidi’s marriage, then A-Mei’s birth. Huaisang got married as well and has two sons. Big Brother also got married and-” he paused and looked at his husband, “Ah! GengXin Jie and Big brother successfully had their second child, a daughter and her name is Lan XiaoHong! A-Qiang was so excited when he found out he has a sister!!”

Lan Wangji’s eyes sparkled with glee, “Brother and Sao Zi have been wanting a daughter. A-Mei must’ve been excited to finally have a girl cousin,”

Lan Sizhui laughed, “A-Mei was so thrilled and demanded that she would help A-Hong’s cultivation practices!”

“Wait- pause!” Nie Mingjue broke in, “You mean to tell me, the future you’re all from, already has the next of heirs?”

“Of course!” Ouyang Zizhen boasted, “Not only that, but since Senior Wei married into the Lan Sect and Maiden Jiang married into the Jin Sect, the three sects are all family. Then, Sect Leader Jiang, that is, Sandu Shengshou and Sect Leader Nie, uh- young master Nie, became sworn brothers not too much after Young Master Nie married. So all four gentry sects are family!”

“Along with the OuyangBailing Sect since Zizhen is sworn brothers with Jin Ling, JingYi, and myself!” Lan SiZhui finished.

The people of the past looked astounded. Then, Jiang Fengmian smiled, “It seems the future isn’t all bad,”

“What’s A-Cheng’s wife's name, again?” Yu Ziyuan looked interested.

Jiang WanYin smiled, “Mother, with all due respect, ShiXiong’s already made a slip by mentioning Young Master Lan’s future wife’s name. I would encourage no arranged marriage and let young me fall in love when I do. My marriage has been extremely happy and I have a beautiful daughter. I would rather let young me flow with faith,”

Jiang Cheng smiled at the second to last sentence, “Mother, Father, please. I think future me is correct,”

Jiang Fengmian smiled at his son, “I knew you’d be a great sect leader, A-Cheng. Your future is bright,”

Jiang Cheng beamed with the praise. Lan Qiren cleared his throat, “Back to the main problem, now that we know about a little bit of Wei WuXian’s future, shouldn’t we see why the future is so bleak at first?”

“And why is my family getting slaughtered!” Wen Qing spoke with anger, “My clan are all medics, we’ve never learnt to use a saber nor is there any blood on our hands other than our patients!”

“Wen’s are Wen’s,” Nie MingJue glared at her, “Aren’t you favored by Wen Ruohan?”

Wei WuXian snapped his head and threatened, “Chifeng Zun, please do not test my patience. Any threats or snides towards Wen Qing and Wen Ning is a direct attack to me,”

Lan WangJi looked at Nie MingJue and glared, soon joined by the others from the future. Grandmaster Lan agreed, “Leave them alone, Sect Leader Nie. They truly are innocent,”

Nie MingJue scoffed, but didn’t reply.

“Then I presume we get to watch the Sunshot Campaign now?” Lan JingYi perked up a bit.

“Yeah or more like listen to the songs...” Jin Ling muttered.

“Oh yeah, why is it doing that?” Madam Jin frowned.

“That must be my bad,” Wei WuXian smiled sheepishly, “When I’m in extreme distress, sometimes I can’t control my cultivation. The resentment must’ve mixed into the array and caused a small mistake,”

“What a wonderful mistake,” Lan Xichen chuckled.

“Then everything will be shown in song?”

“Mn,” Lan WangJi answered.

“How fun!” Nie Huaisang applauded.

“Who wants to activate it?” Jiang WanYin asked.

“I do!” Ouyang Zizhen grinned, hand encasing with spiritual energy and activating the array.

They all prepared themselves as the black fell away again.

***Airen = spouse, lover, beloved, darling, sweetheart, etc.**

***Baobei = baby, love, darling, treasure, babe, precious, etc.**

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so I hope this was enjoyable. AND I wasn't planning on bringing back LWJ, but then I realized there was so much angst coming that WWX would literally have died without him and we also need our favorite couple to be the healing in between the pain :)

The Song is: 'Ready as I'll ever be' from Tangled the Series

Incoming War

Chapter Notes

These chapters are so long. Also this chapter is super long, like- holy shit man.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The black gave way to show the image of a building made of red stone.

Ouyang Zizhen hummed in interest, “Nightless City, though it looks different,”

“This is how it looked before the Wen Sect and the cultivation world went to war,” Wei WuXian informed.

Wen Qing couldn’t help but comment, “Do not be fooled by how bright it is. Living in Qishan is learning to walk on eggshells,”

It shifted again to show Yunmeng and Lotus Pier.

Jiang WanYin and Wei WuXian both sucked in harsh breaths. Jin Ling tilted his head, narrowing his eyes, “Something’s off...”

“This was before...” Jiang WanYin exhaled softly, “Before everything,”

Another change, this time, QingHe, followed by Gusu.

Once again, Lan WangJi’s breath tightened slightly and Grandmaster Lan looked nostalgic. The two Lan juniors frowned, “The library pavilion is different...”

“What do you mean?” Lan Xichen frowned, “The pavilion looks correct,”

The two Lan’s understood, Lan SiZhui checking his father, “Baba, are you and A-Die and ShuShu and Grandmaster Lan going to be alright reliving all of this? A-Die could barely handle it when we watched-”

“A-Yuan,” Wei WuXian cut him off quickly, softly shaking his head and Lan SiZhui’s lips parted in surprise.

Lan WangJi narrowed his eyes, “Wei Ying?”

Wei WuXian just smiled and rested his head on his husband’s shoulder, “It’s not important,”

“We’ll be fine SiZhui,”Jiang WanYin answered the question, “...we can always close our eyes and turn away,”

Finally, Lanling.

The music began once more and everyone got ready.

“A warning,”

“Wei-xiong, why are you singing again?” Nie Huaisang looked confused.

Wei WuXian shrugged, “I’m the epicenter of a lot of things,”

“How so?” Yu ZiYuan frowned.

Wei WuXian met her gaze, “I won a war for the cultivation world,”

The people of the past *stared* .

“to the people,”

The scene was showing the GusuLan Lectures, the classroom where all the disciples from various sects were sitting.

“The good,”

The scene showed the sect leaders of the great sects walking up stairs. The only sect missing was Wen Ruohan.

“And the evil ,”

Wen Ruohan sat down at a seat above them, the sect leaders of the four great sects glancing up at him with hidden annoyance.

“When is this?” Nie MingJue seethed.

“The archery contest,” Lan WangJi responded.

“This is war...”

The scene showed the front of the Sun Palace, a bloody battle feeling the place as Wen soldiers fought against disciples from other sects. The sound of a dizi was briefly heard

over the music but no one could pinpoint it before the scene changed

“A warning,”

A man stood beside Wen Chao, his face serious.

“to the soldier,”

Wei WuXian and Jiang WanYin both seethed, the younger spitting, “Wen Zhuliu,”

“Its been years and I’ve never forgiven that loyal dog,” Wei WuXian snorted.

“The civilian,”

The scene showed Yunmeng, the laughter and sounds resonating from the pier. The seven people who all called this place home, smiled.

“The martyr,”

The scene changed to show the face of Wei WuXian.

“Well, thats fitting,” Ouyang Zizhen blinked.

Wei Ying sighed, closing his eyes for a few seconds and telling himself, *‘Just accept it wei ying...just accept it,’*

“The victim,”

The scene was now flickering between a variety of faces, a few which they recognized, others they did not. It paused on a split scene. Half of the room was Gusu, the other Lotus Pier.

Wei WuXian blinked slowly, before turning to his son, “A-Yuan...pass me some tea, my head and throat hurt,”

Lan WangJi looked at him worried, Wei WuXian just smiled softly. Lan SiZhui gave his father a look but got up, Jin Ling also rising, the two walking towards a small table with a teapot, cups, and a bunch of types of tea.

“This is war,”

Everyone gasped in horror as both sects of scenery glowed with orange as flames devoured the buildings.

Lan WangJi and Grandmaster Lan both hardened their gazes, the other five Lan’s, Lan JingYi and Lan SiZhui included, all paled. Wei WuXian and Jiang WanYin both grimaced painfully, the five living in Yunmeng from the past were horrified.

The scene shifted to show a boat sailing away from Lotus Pier, which was illuminated as it burned. There were two figures in the boat, one screaming and thrashing, the other breathing fast and trying to break the binds.

Jiang Cheng and Wei WuXian were trapped in the boats by Zidian, the heir screaming with horror, “A-NIANG!!!”

Yu ZiYuan knew exactly what she had done and sighed painfully, “So, I’m dead too,”

The three children snapped their eyes towards the two Jiang leaders, each of them extremely pale. Jiang Fengmian smiled softly at them, reaching over and stroking both Jiang Cheng and Wei Ying's hair, "Its okay. You both have grown up so well,"

He blatantly ignored the flinch from their future versions.

"Jiang Cheng! Jiang Cheng! Look! It's Sect Leader Jiang's boat!!!" Wei WuXian exclaimed, and the two boys yelled out for the male.

Yu ZiYuan's eye twitched, "You...weren't at the pier?!"

Jiang WanYin spoke quickly, "Father had to leave for a while and Wen Chao chose that specific time to attack,"

"It's the moment of truth,"

Jiang Fengmian was on the boat, the scene obviously progressing forward, "What happened?"

"Release us first, A-Die!" Jiang Cheng begged.

"This is your mother's Zidian, I'm afraid it won't let me-" Zidian responded at Jiang Fengmian's touch, turning into a ring on Jiang Fengmian's finger. The surprise was evident on all three male's faces.

Yu ZiYuan froze as her sworn sister, children, and husband all snapped their eyes to her. Jiang Fengmian's voice came out breathlessly, "...my lady?"

Yu ZiYuan cleared her throat, before snapping, "What? Surprised to know I gave you mastery. You're my husband are you not? Father of my children?"

It was not an explanation and Jiang Fengmian continued to look at her, before blinking and turning away. Madam Jin smiled slightly at her friend, *'So you do love him,'*

The scene shifted to show Wei WuXian standing in front of Wen Qing. Her face was hard with disagreement, while Wei WuXian's was desperate. Behind them, Wen Ning was checking the pulse of a male lying on the bed, passed out. The boy was Jiang Cheng.

"Lady Wen!"

"NO! Are you insane?!" Wen Qing screamed at Wei WuXian, "Do you even know what you're asking?!"

"YES!" Wei WuXian exclaimed.

Jiang WanYin's eyebrow twitched and he snarled, "No, you did not, you self sacrificing IDIOT!!"

Wei WuXian frowned, but remained silent. Though it was clear he disagreed.

Wen Qing closed her eyes and glared, "No, its theoretical!"

"Theoretical it may be, but it can help Jiang Cheng get back his golden core then its a chance!!" Wei WuXian argued.

Wen Qing froze, "Oh my god..."

Wei WuXian tilted and smiled at her, "Its not theoretical,"

“I lost my core?!” Jiang Cheng screamed.

Wei Ying also looked startled, but then determination came on his face, “You won’t lose it again,”

The scene shifted again, the room the same, except this time, Wei WuXian was kowtowing to Wen Qing. She had horrified pain and shock on her face, Wen Ning also glancing back at his sister with wide eyes, “Young Master Wei...”

“Lady Wen...” Wei WuXian’s voice came out desperately, “Please...please...”

He glanced at her slightly, “If it was Wen Ning, wouldn’t you do the same?”

Wen Qing’s face turned conflicted before she cursed and nodded, “Fine...”

Jiang WanYin inhaled sharply, “You...guilttripped her?!”

“She wouldn’t agree!” Wei WuXian defended.

Jiang WanYin sent a withering glare, “Do you ever wonder why?!”

“Do you ever wonder how guilty I felt?!” Wei WuXian threw right back.

“Jiujiu, daijiu,” Jin Ling stepped in between, holding out a cup of tea to Wei WuXian, who blinked surprised, before taking it.

The scene changed again to show Jiang Cheng now awake, but blind folded. Wei WuXian was standing in front of him, “Remember, you tell them your name is Wei Ying,”

“Are you sure Baoshan Sanren can restore a core?” Jiang Cheng frowned.

“Yes...just go forward and answer every question. Your name is Wei Ying, WuXian. She’s my grandmother and my mother told me I could return for a wish if I needed it. Take it and fix your core,” Wei WuXian nodded and watched as Jiang Cheng walked up a mountain path. He then yelled, “Jiang Cheng! This is your only chance, don’t be careless next time!”

Jiang Cheng waved back. Wei WuXian watched him from a distance, before glancing behind him, Wen Ning coming out. He gave a soft smile, “Let’s go,”

They followed after Jiang Cheng.

“ And the moment to lie,”

“Baoshan Sanren?!” Everyone from the past exclaimed, all eyes snapping to Wei Ying.

“A-Xian, you know where Baoshan Sanren lives?” Jiang Yanli blinked.

Wei Ying looked at his future self, with a frown, “No. I don’t,”

“Of course you don’t,” Jiang WanYin sneered, “Because that was a lie. You lied to me on how I got my core back and you took that secret to the grave!”

“So thats why its ‘the moment to lie’?” Jin ZiXuan understood.

Wei WuXian smiled tightly, “It got my brother’s core back. I have no regrets with my choice,”

Lan WangJi tightened his grip on his husband, placing a soft peck on the crown of his head,
“Too kind,”

‘Yet, so useless,’ Wei WuXian thought.

The scene showed Jiang Fengmian and Yu Ziyuan, staring at one another with opposing expressions. A sneer and a solemn face. Jiang Fengmian turned away, walking onto the boat. He sat down and held a box, opening up to see a broken hairpin. The man beside Jiang Fengmian smiled comfortingly, “Sect Leader, I’m sure Madam will love it once it’s fixed,”

“Hm,”

“Its the moment to live,”

The scene switched.

“A-NIANG! A-DIE!!” Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli screamed, the Jiang leaders both stilling at their dead bodies.

Yu ZiYuan was lying on the floor, covered in blood, but she was facing towards her husband. Jiang Fengmian was kneeling, a sword through his chest. In between them laid a single hairpin. The same hairpin from before, except now it was fixed.

“And the moment to die,”

Yu ZiYuan sucked in a breath, “How would you get killed? As much as a calm person, you’re cultivation is strong,”

She was speaking to her husband, obviously. Jiang Fengmian nodded, “You as well. Zidian aside, your swordsmanship is skilled,”

Jiang WanYin informed with a dark tone, “Wen Zhuliu melted your cores,”

Wei Ying’s eyes hardened, “That annoying core melting hand!”

Wei WuXian’s lips curled slightly, “He also crushed shidi’s core later,”

Wei Ying’s expression darkened. Lan WangJi gave his husband a look, “Airen, stop riling up Wei Ying,”

Wei WuXian hummed thoughtlessly, finishing the tea. He then placed it on the table that had conveniently appeared right beside his seat.

“The moment to fight,”

They saw Lan WangJi standing in front of a burning library pavilion, gripping his sword tightly as it dug into the ground as support. His one leg was bleeding, but fury was clear on his features.

Wei WuXian’s eyes darkened, “When I found out about them breaking your leg, it wasn’t that bad...”

Lan WangJi sent a look over to his past self, “Past me cannot speak about pain and personal feelings very well,”

Lan Zhan glared and Lan WangJi met it back indifferently, “See?”

Wei WuXian snorted, bursting into soft giggles. Wei Ying blinked, “Ah, I think Lan Zhan does a great job at expressing things. Like when I tease him and he reacts!”

Wei WuXian’s giggling abruptly halted and he whined slightly, “Oh, to be young again. My Lan Zhan has learned. He can tease back. The only time I get a proper reaction is if I tease him *too* much. Next thing I know, I’m about to get ravished,”

There was a small pause as everyone processed the words. Wei Ying then sputtered, turning a bright red, Jiang Yanli, Nie MingJue, and Lan Xichen had burst into laughter, the Wen siblings, Jin ZiXuan, Jiang Cheng, and Nie Huaisang all choked, the adults had all blinked and froze, Jiang WanYin facepalmed and let out a yell of annoyance, the four juniors all turned bright red in embarrassment, Lan Qiren and Grandmaster Lan had gone blank, and the two light bearers...

“SHAMELESS!!!!” Lan Zhan and Lan WangJi both roared.

“The moment to fight,”

They saw Jiang Cheng and Jin ZiXuan fighting against Wen soldiers, one wielding a gold sword, the other switching between Sandu and a vibrant purple whip.

Wei Ying whistled lowly, “Jiang Cheng, you’re amazing!”

Yu ZiYuan was also prideful, glancing at her son, “Perhaps when we get back I can train you with Zidian...”

Jiang Cheng beamed at both the praise and the suggestion.

“To fight,”

Nie MingJue was raising a cup to the sky standing in front of a large collection of cultivators from minor sects. The larger minor and great sects, minus the Wen, were behind him. Nie MingJue smirked, “Let us shoot down the sun!!”

“To fight,”

They saw a war camp, Jiang Yanli walking between prisoners and aiding in injuries.

Wen Qing leaned forward slightly, and couldn't help but be impressed, “Maiden Jiang, have you trained in healing?”

Jiang Yanli glanced at her surprised, “No, I haven't. Only basics,”

“Your hands are extremely steady and even just with the basics, you're doing quite well!”
Wen Qing praised, “Healing cultivation might work quite well for you, like it does for me. I can't wield a sword despite the size of my core, but medicine is different,”

Jiang Yanli looked intrigued, “Hm...”

“Wei WuXian!!” Jiang Cheng exclaimed, startled.

Wei WuXian was falling, body passing through black clouds as his silver eyes glanced upwards. They followed his gaze to see the faint silhouettes of cultivators on swords, staring down. Wen cultivators. The scenery around them grew clearer as he fell farther, it was dark and cold, no life anywhere.

“To fight!!!!”

They all jumped at this time and it was sung louder, with anguish in the tone.

The scene shifted just before Wei WuXian hit the ground, giving way to a bloody battle scene.

Lan JingYi swallowed, slightly pale, “Senior Wei! What was that?”

Wei WuXian glanced at him and then spoke calmly, with a smile, “That? That was when I was thrown into the Burial Mounds,”

Wei Ying’s breathing faltered as his siblings went still in fear.

Multiple people shrieked, “ *What ?!*”

“To the right,”

They focused on Jin ZiXuan, switching to Lan WangJi, then Jiang Cheng.

“to the left,”

The scene was now Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli hugging tightly, both of them having tears in their eyes. Jiang Yanli stepped back, “Where’s A-Xian?”

Jiang Cheng’s face turned pained and he glanced towards Lan WangJi, who looked down, frustration in his eyes. Jin ZiXuan was behind Jiang Yanli, blinking surprised, eyes widening. Jiang Yanli glanced towards the sword on her brother’s back, it was Suiban. She shook her head, “No, no, no, where is A-Xian?! A-Cheng?!”

Jiang Cheng swallowed, “We...Second Young Master Lan and I got some information. The guards said that Wen Chao caught him and threw him into the Burial Mounds,”

Jin ZiXuan went still, not noticing when Nie MingJue had arrived, the male also freezing, “Who? Young Master Wei?”

Lan WangJi nodded, before muttering, “Wei Ying’s sword sealed itself...”

Eyes snapped towards Wei Ying in shock. Jin Ling spoke in awe, “Your sword could already seal itself at this age?”

“A-Ling,” Wei WuXian glanced at his nephew, “Shidi lost his core when he was 17,”

The four juniors blinked, before Ouyang Zizhen muttered, “So it was sealed for that long...”

The people of the past weren’t sure if they wanted to understand.

“We will fight,”

The scene changed to show two people thrown into a prison cell, chains connecting their wrists and ankles. It was Wen Qing and Wen Ning.

Wei WuXian sat up and his mouth spoke in fear, “Jiejie! A-Ning!”

Wen Qing and Wen Ning blinked at the familiarity. Wen Qing glanced at Wei WuXian, “I’m your jiejie?”

Wei WuXian glanced at them before lowering his head and slumping, “Yes, you’re my sister and Wen Ning became my little brother...I apologize...I forgot you aren’t my Qing-Jie and A-Ning,”

Wei Ying pursed his lips and spoke slowly, “Qing-Jie. A-Ning,” he then smiled, “Hey! That must mean I’m pretty close to Lady Wen and Wen Ning, right?”

Wei WuXian smiled softly, nodding, “Mn,”

Neither Wei noticed the eye contact exchange between the two Jiang siblings.

“To the death,”

The scene showed Nie MingJue swinging Baxia down on a Wen soldier, cutting off their head. The wen troops around them froze, yelling to retreat.

“Sect Leader Nie has killed Young Master Wen!!!”

Nie MingJue’s lips curled in satisfaction, “Serves Wen Xu right,”

Everyone in the room agreed, especially those who knew the things Wen Xu had done. And adding fuel to the fire, Grandmaster Lan smiled coldly, “Wen Xu was the one who burned down Cloud Recesses,”

Lan Xichen rose to his feet and bowed, “MingJue-Ge, thank you,”

Nie MingJue nodded, “I’ll do it again, even if he doesn’t burn anything,”

“To the edge,”

The scene changed and they saw Wei WuXian, purple robes stained red and face contorted into pain. He was laying on his stomach, bleeding from various areas of his body. He weakly lifted his head, pushing himself to crawl forward. He then coughed and

choked as resentment swirled around him, whispers of spirits cackling and trying to get Wei WuXian to submit spread around the room, shivers running down everyone's spine.

“Wei WuXian,”

“Wei WuXian, do you want revenge?”

“Pain, pain! So much pain!”

Wei WuXian froze, blood draining from his face. His mind began to flicker, horrors of those three months surfacing after so long. He didn't even notice when he slammed his hands against the side of his head. His voice synced with the Wei WuXian on the scene, both of them screaming.

“GO AWAY!!!”

Lan WangJi's heart lurched at the yell, “Wei Ying!!”

Wei WuXian was trembling, eyes shaken with obvious terror. He turned around, curling into a ball as Lan WangJi held him and whispered softly, hands clamped over his ears. Jiang Yanli gripped Wei Ying firmly, trembling. Jiang Cheng was also no better, horrified.

“Of the earth,”

The scene changed again and this time, they were out of the Burial Mounds. Wei WuXian was dressed in black and red, a flute at his waist. He looked different than before, paler, thinner, slightly older. He was staring at Lan WangJi and Jiang Cheng, both boys staring at him with a mixture of worry and relief.

“You prick! Where did you disappear for three months?” Jiang Cheng snapped.

Wei WuXian just smiled, chuckling. Jiang Cheng shook his head, before frowning, “The Wen’s said you were thrown into the Burial Mounds,”

Wei WuXian’s expression shifted slightly. He glanced down where a blue faced lady in a red dress leaned onto his leg, her head against his thigh. She smiled at the other two eerily, as a small ghost child snarled, showing his fangs. They were reacting to their master’s shift in emotion. Wei WuXian smiled again, patting the ghost females hair and stroking softly, ignoring the slightly disturbed, worried, and dark looks he was getting, “If I were thrown in there, then how would I be here?”

Jiang Cheng was distracted by the answer, muscles relaxing and nodding, “Right, no one comes out of there alive,”

Wei WuXian’s smile grew wider, silver eyes sparkling with an unfamiliar malice.

Like the two normal cultivators on the scene, the others of the past were also deeply disturbed. Grandmaster Lan frowned a bit, glancing at his nephew for an explanation, only to see him preoccupied by Wei WuXian, who had stopped trembling, but was still gripping his husband’s robes for life.

Jiang WanYin explained, “This was when he was tracking Wen Chao and Wen Zhuliu. This was when Shixiong and I killed them both,”

Wei Ying turned to the people of the future, voice coming out much more leveled than he had expected, “I was in that place for three months?”

“Mn,” Lan WangJi answered and then confessed, “You haven’t even told me what happened or how you survived. You never spoke about your time in the Burial Mounds, avoiding how you managed to live there for all your life. The only thing I know is that you should’ve died, but by some miracle, whether it be the cushioned landing of corpses or resentment catching you, you survived the fall and you mastered demonic cultivation in there,”

“A-Xian must’ve told someone,” Jiang Fengmian frowned.

“Yeah, perhaps A-Jie,” Jiang Cheng suggested.

Jiang WanYin tilted his head, looking solemn, “If he did, then he would never have had to leave. A-Jie wouldn’t have let him be alone again,”

“Its a topic that is just not spoken about,” Lan SiZhui said sternly, glancing worriedly at Wei WuXian, who had stopped trembling, silver eyes exhausted and the evidence of tears clear to them all, “We do not speak of it, because A-Die can’t. Please, respect that,”

“Its a brave new world,”

The scene changed again and Wei WuXian was sitting down in a room with Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli. Jiang Yanli was crying and smiling, reaching up and gently holding the side of Wei WuXian’s head. The evidence of the cold man who had been sitting with ghosts was gone, Wei WuXian looking similar to before. He was tender and soft, leaning into the touch, “Shijie, I’m okay,”

Jiang Yanli nodded, reaching down to take her brother's hands, “Where were you A-Xian?”

And unlike with Jiang Cheng, Wei WuXian couldn’t hide his expression. It turned into a blank one, hesitant and dark. Jiang Yanli frowned, “A-Xian?”

Jiang Cheng also looked worried at the side. Wei WuXian then moved, hugging Jiang Yanli tightly. He closed his eyes, hiding his face in her shoulder, “It doesn’t matter. I’m here now,”

Yu ZiYuan frowned, “You lied,”

Multiple sighs followed her words and they all looked to the people of the future, similar expressions of pain on their faces. Wei WuXian was the only one who looked normal, color returning to his features. Lan JingYi said, “Senior Wei lied a lot...does lie a lot,”

“From the last to the first,”

They saw Wei WuXian playing the flute, silver eyes turned a deep crimson. Resentment swirled as corpses rose up from the battle and attacked the Wen soldiers with no remorse. There were no other disciples there, the people of the past realized. It was Wei WuXian fighting against a whole force...and he was winning. After the screams of the wens paused, the dizi was lowered and the red turned back to cold silver.

“WOAH!!!” The four juniors beamed in awe.

Ouyang Zizhen bounced, “Senior Wei!!!! I knew you were powerful but not that powerful!!!”

Wei WuXian smiled slightly at the praise. Lan WangJi made the younger’s cheeks turn pink as he agreed with the junior, “Wei Ying is good in everything,”

“Lan Zhan!!”

Lan Zhan hardened his gaze and grumbled, “Shameless...”

“To the right,”

Another battle scene, this time it was Lan WangJi. He was fighting with his Guqin, the strums of the strings sending large numbers of soldiers backwards.

“To the left,”

Jiang Cheng's Zidian slashed across the screen as he moved powerfully through the waves of enemies, scowling fiercely and eyes dancing with thunder. Sandu was slashing around, Zidian striking and glowing powerfully with its young master.

"We will fight,"

They saw a boy wearing Wen robes, writing somethings down and sending a letter out of a window. His face was revealed to be Jin Guangyao, or as he was known now, Meng Yao.

"Meng Yao was a spy for the Sunshot Campaign," Wei WuXian answered bitterly.

"To the death,"

They were outside the Sun Palace now, blood staining the floor and corpses and disciples fighting. Wei WuXian was standing on a pillar, playing his flute as resentment swirled and took care of most of the enemy forces. Behind him at the top of the stairs was Lan Xichen and Nie MingJue fighting side by side, against Wen Ruohan, who stood powerful in front of them, a calm smirk on his face.

"Brother!"

"Da-Ge!"

Both Nie Huaisang and Lan Zhan couldn't help but call as they watched their older brothers get thrown backwards by a powerful blast from Wen Ruohan. Lan Xichen and Nie MingJue both exchanged eye contact, before turning to their brothers.

"To the edge,"

They saw Wei WuXian pull out something from his robes, an intricate silver metal piece the size of his palm. It had a red tassel and glowed with resentment. When it was used, the tides of the battle shifted and all the Wen soldiers were screaming as resentment and corpses attacked them. A few disciples on Wei WuXian's side were injured as well, but he focused on the Wen's, smirking wickedly with blood red eyes.

Wei WuXian seethed, "I never should have made that stupid thing!!!"

"A weapon of mass destruction, a target, eventually the thing that ended your life," Lan Wangji listed darkly, before his tone softened slightly, "But it also acted a shield for quite some time,"

Wei WuXian agreed, "It did something good I suppose,"

"Of the earth,"

A sword pierced through Wen Ruohan's chest, his eyes widening and the spiritual blast he was about to attack Lan Xichen and Nie Mingjue with faded. The two friends, glanced up surprised, to see Wen Ruohan collapse down to the floor, bleeding and eyes closing. Meng Yao stood there proudly, now in normal robes, not the Wen sect ones. The sword in his hand was covered with Wen Ruohan's blood. He turned and, smiled at the two, "Sect Leader Lan, Sect Leader Nie,"

"Oh," Jin Zixuan said, surprised.

"So that's why he was acknowledged by Guangshan," Madam Jin sneered, "He killed Wen Ruohan,"

"Wait, so the war was won because of Wei-Xiong and Meng Yao?" Nie Huaisang blinked and was startled, "Then why are the sects trying to kill Wei-xiong later?"

Wei WuXian snorted in amusement, Lan WangJi's face turned dark, Jiang WanYin sighed and hung his head, Grandmaster Lan flinched, while the juniors just gave Nie Huaisang dead looks that spoke, *'Take a guess?'*

"Its a brave new world,"

The scene was a Banquet in the Sun Palace, everyone freshly changed and washed up. They were laughing and celebrating. The end of the war since Meng Yao was now in Jin Sect robes, a vermilion mark on his forehead.

"Its a brave new world!"

The scene moved forward again, this time Wei WuXian standing in the center of the room, with all the eyes on him. He glanced at Jin Guangshan with cold amusement, before turning around and walking out of the Banquet, black robes fluttering with him.

"Wait, that was the end of the sunshot campaign, but its not done," Lan SiZhui frowned.

The others from the future had also realized, all of them frowning in confusion.

"A warning to the prophet,"

The scene shifted to show Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian standing in front of one another, the latter glaring at Lan WangJi coldly. Lan WangJi looked equally as frustrated, "Wei Ying! Demonic cultivation corrupts the mind! There's always a price to pay, there has been no expectation in history!"

"I'll pay whatever price," Wei WuXian spat and then turned to Lan WangJi eyes flashing red, "As for my mind, how do others know what's in it? What do others care?"

Hurt flashed and Lan WangJi yelled, "Wei WuXian!!"

Wei WuXian screamed right back, resentment bursting from his flute in his hand, “Lan WangJi!!”

Lan WangJi closed his eyes, turning away from the scene. Wei WuXian also sighed painfully. He then croaked weakly, “Husband...thank you for bringing me to Gusu when you found me,”

Lan WangJi smiled, “No need for thanks yours,”

Wei WuXian glanced at his past self. Wei Ying looked very unnerved, unsettled by the argument. On the other hand, the four juniors were in disbelief.

“What?! There’s no way that’s real!!” Lan JingYi protested, “That’s impossible! You two fell in love when you met that night of Senior Wei snuck into Cloud Recesses after curfew with two jars of Emperors Smile!”

“What?” Lan Qiren and Yu ZiYuan both spat but were ignored.

Lan Zhan jolted, “How do you know that?”

“Senior Wei tells us stories,” Ouyang Zizhen shrugged and then smiled, “The ones about you two are his favorite,”

Jin Ling also protested, “How did that arguing pair become my shameless uncles?! You’ve been married for over a decade and you’re as shameless as when Daijiu decided to confess in front of me, Jin GuangYao, and Zewu Jun!”

“Hey, it’s not my fault Big Brother finally lost his patience and decided to snap at me telling me Lan Zhan has been in love with me the entire time,” Wei WuXian defended, “I really thought he wasn’t,”

“You were covered in *hickies* !!!” Jin Ling shrieked at his idiot of an uncle.

Wei WuXian flushed red, “A-ah, we were drunk though...”

“DRUNK?!” Lan Qiren’s eyebrow twitched, while Wei Ying was still swimming on the fact that at one point he was covered in hickies...hickies by the second jade of Lan. Just the idea of it made his heart suddenly race. He suddenly realized what was happening to him and he swore, ‘*Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit-*’

“Can we move on from what my parent’s do together?” Lan SiZhui begged.

“Yes, please,” Jin ZiXuan groaned.

“The liar,”

They saw Jin Guangyao, with a smile on his face.

“The honest,”

The scene showed Lan Xichen speaking to Nie MingJue.

“Oh, ho, ho,” Jiang WanYin laughed, “This song is specifically accurate,”

“This is war,”

The scene was at night, heavy rain following. Wei WuXian and another female were walking through a place-

“Are those elderly?!” Wei Ying screamed in rage, “Why are there elderly and women chained! Oh my god, is that a *kid* ?!”

It was a kid. An old woman was carrying a young child on her back, walking back and forth with a flag in her hand. The scene shifted a few times to show the rest of the labor camps, they saw Jin’s killing woman and whipping. They were shown the valley of dead bodies and the female’s face, which was Wen Qing. She was cradling a body with a flag stuck in his torso. She screamed in pain, “A-NING!!!”

Wen Qing shot forward towards her other self, pale. She stared down at the body and a hand flew to her mouth in horror. Wei Ying shot up on reflex, not able to handle people crying or such pain. He quickly rushed to Wen Qing, guiding her back to Wen Ning, who hugged his sister tightly, “Jiejie, jiejie! I’m here!”

Wei Ying stayed there, glancing around and finding a teapot. He walked towards it, pouring out some in a cup and crouching down in front of Wen Qing, “Lady Wen? Here. Shijie used to give me tea when I was in emotional distress when I was younger,”

“To the leader,”

The scene changed to show Jiang Cheng on his feet, looking at Jin Guangshan who smiled, “Sect Leader Jiang, Young Master Wei is your subordinate but now he has taken Wen-dogs to the Burial Mounds, revived Wen Ning into a fierce corpse who killed multiple Jin guards,”

“I’m sorry- did he just say revived into a fierce corpse?” Nie Huaisang’s eyes almost popped from his sockets.

“A-Ning is still alive in the future, well as alive as a sentient fierce corpse can be,” Wei WuXian shrugged.

Wen Ning looked at Wei Ying, who glanced right back. Wen Qing looked at the senior disciple and gently touched his shoulder, “Thank you,”

Wei Ying blinked, startled, but smiled awkwardly, “You’re welcome, I suppose? Though, I haven’t done anything, but if I brought Wen Ning back, then you must’ve been extremely kind or helpful or both!”

Wen Ning smiled, “Young Master Wei is th-thoughtful,”

Wei Ying shrugged, glancing back as he heard Jiang Cheng call him back. He was about to move, but Wei WuXian caught his eye and shook his head. Wei Ying was shocked, and looked back towards his brother with a confused frown. He then made himself comfortable on the floor.

“The pariah,”

The scene changed once more to show Wen Qing walking with a group of about 50 people, all of which included elderly, disabled, and a small child. There was also one person that was unconscious, and they all recognized it as Wen Ning.

“These are those elderly from before, that were farming,” Jiang Fengmian addressed.

“That is correct, these are the Wen remnants. The terrible and evil Wen-dogs the demon Wei WuXian took from the labor camps from the Jin Sect,” Wei WuXian smiled with bitterness.

Jin ZiXuan’s eyes widened and he looked at his Mother, who also met his gaze. She seethed, “Guangshan, you bastard,”

“The victor,”

They saw Jin Guangshan looking at Jin Guangyao, “It doesn't matter how you do it, either kill Wei WuXian and take the Stygian Tiger Seal, or get him to hand it over...or he could join the Jin sect as well. He would be able to keep experimenting with the dark arts. I'd even provide him with test subjects!”

Wei Ying's eyes widened and Jiang Cheng erupted, “Jin ZiXuan! I hope that after this your father will stay far away from my brother!!!”

Jin ZiXuan nodded numbly. He then looked at Wei WuXian, “Did I let him get away with the camps...those people, they're innocents,”

Wei WuXian nodded, “You didn't know. Young Master Jin, perhaps you haven't realized, but you're sheltered. The only power you have is due to your birthright and future as sect leader. But your Father has no true care for you, nor Madam Jin. He went as far as risk your own life to get destroy my name so he could get his hands on my amulet,”

Madam Jin turned red, “A-*** Rong**,”

“Yes?” Jin ZiXuan answered his mother after processing the words he had been told.

“When we get out, remind me to start stripping all power away from that pig of a sect leader,” She seethed.

Jin ZiXuan nodded slowly, still in a daze. He frowned a bit, the words still swarming in his head.

“The messiah,”

They saw Wei WuXian again, leading the group of Wen Remnants into a clearing. He turned his eyes red and whistled a few times sharply and sternly, resentment bursting away from them to make it easier to breathe. They were in a clearing, Wei WuXian glancing back as Wen Qing frowned, “Can we even stay here?”

“I once lived here for three months,” Wei WuXian shrugged.

“You took them to the Burial Mounds?” Lan Qiren blinked.

“Why didn’t you take them to Yunmeng?” Yu ZiYuan frowned.

Wei WuXian blinked, “I couldn’t. It wasn’t safe for me in Yunmeng, how could I protect Wen’s? The world hated anyone with that surname, Shidi didn’t understand why I wanted to protect them. He didn’t understand anything, actually, but that’s my fault. I...kept a lot of things a secret. I pushed everyone away because it was safer. And plus...I liked it there with the remnants,” he smiled in memory, “It was super warm, fun, safe actually. Despite the place, it was great. We were poor, barely had enough to eat, but we managed. Nie-xiong sent things every week if he could and it helped a lot,”

Wei Ying smiled brightly at Nie Huaisang, who grinned right back.

“This is war,”

The scene showed Jiang Cheng and Wei WuXian in a cave, in front of them lay an unconscious Wen Ning covered in talisman. Jiang Cheng was in rage, “Wei WuXian! Do you not understand?! If you continue to protect them, then I can’t protect you!!!”

“Then don’t,”

Jiang Cheng felt his heart halt at how easy his brother said that.

“It’s the moment of truth,”

The scene switched slightly. Wen Qing walked into the cave, Wei WuXian staring off into the distance, a few tears rolling down his face, Jiang Cheng nowhere to be found. Wen Qing frowned, standing in front of him, “Aren’t you going to tell him about his core?”

Wei WuXian glanced at her, inhaling and smiling tightly, “Sect Leader Jiang does not need to be bothered by small things,”

“And what about your shijie? Shouldn’t you at least tell her *why* you are being like this?”

“And the moment to lie,”

Wei WuXian’s smile slipped into something painful. He began to walk out of the cave speaking as he did, “Shijie? I have no one like that anymore. Maiden Jiang should not be tangled in the affairs of a demonic cultivator,”

Jiang Yanli gasped, pained. She looked at Wei Ying, “A-Xian! Never push Shijie away! Never push either of us away!”

Wei Ying opened his mouth to agree, but Wei WuXian cut in fast, “Don’t make any promises,”

Jiang WanYin wanted to argue, but then sighed, “For fucks sake, ShiXiong. You’re going to break yourself too early,”

“Let him be broken then,”

“Wei Ying!” Lan WangJi exclaimed.

Wei WuXian glanced up, confused, “What?”

Lan WangJi just stared at him with concern, *‘Airen...what happened in the past 20 months...’*

“The moment to live,”

The scene showed Jin ZiXuan smiling lovingly at Jiang Yanli, the female laughing softly as she cradled a child in her arms.

Jin ZiXuan and Jiang Yanli both felt their eyes widened. They looked happy...really happy. The two glanced at one another, Jiang Yanli smiling a bit, Jin ZiXuan also smiling a bit, before turning away quickly.

“And the moment to die,”

The scene changed to see Wei WuXian pale and horrified as he stared at the golden robed male in front of him. Jin ZiXuan was holding his chest where blood was staining it, with a soft smile. He managed, “A-Li...A-Li is still waiting for you,”

He fell to the floor to reveal Wen Ning with a bloody hand.

Another quick switch for Wei WuXian to have the same expression, except this time, he was staring as Jiang Yanli’s body went limp as the sword pulled from her chest.

Madam Jin shrieked in rage, turning towards Wen Ning and Wei Ying, “YOU- YOU KILLED MY SON!!!”

Both boys were pale as Madam Jin stormed towards them. Wen Ning cowered, Wen Qing shielding her brother, Wei Ying standing up and blocking them, “Madam Jin-”

He stopped when his vision was blocked by gold to see Jin Ling standing in front, staring firmly at his grandmother with a hard glare, “Nainai, you are wrong. DaiJiu and Master Wen did not kill A-Die,”

Madam Jin looked livid about to argue, but Grandmaster Lan spoke sternly, “Madam Jin, please, sit down. We will get to that later. Let’s finish this viewing,”

She huffed, but moved back. Jin Ling carefully moved back to his seat as well, Wei Ying released a soft breath and returning to the floor. Jiang Yanli frowned, “A-Xian, why don’t you come and sit?”

“I dont know, ask Big Me,”

She took one glance at the pained expression on Wei WuXian’s face and decided against asking right now.

“The moment to fight,”

The scene switched to see Wei WuXian throwing a punch on Wen Ning. He then grabbed the fierce corpse by the collar, “Who did you kill?! Do you know who you killed?! You could’ve killed anyone, but why did it have to be Jin ZiXuan?! What is Shijie supposed to do?! What is Shijie’s son supposed to do?!?”

Wen Ning looked terribly guilty, “I’m sorry...it- it was my fault,”

Wei WuXian stared at him, before releasing his grip and tears streamed down as he fell to his knees, holding his face and sobbing, “Can someone please tell me...what am I supposed to do now?”

“Oh, A-Xian...” Jiang Yanli whimpered softly, seeing Lan WangJi move to kiss Wei WuXian softly in comfort.

“The moment to fight,”

The scene progressed again and Wei WuXian was screaming in protest laying on the bed, staring at Wen Qing with denial, “NO!!! NO NO NO!! JIEJIE!!!”

Wen Qing had tears in her eyes and she smiled softly, “I didn’t get to tell you...but I will tell you now,”

“NO! Don’t leave, please, please,” Wei WuXian begged.

“Thank you...and...I’m sorry...” Wen Qing lifted her hand, flicking Wei WuXian’s forehead, the demonic cultivator gasping, though it sounded more like a sob as his eyes fell shut and he turned still.

Wen Qing sobbed, looking at her brother, “Let’s go to Koi Tower,”

“What?” Lan JingYi muttered, “But they would’ve...”

Wei WuXian whimpered pitifully, biting his lip and hanging his head.

“To fight,”

The scene showed Wen Qing tied to a wooden pole, flames dancing all around her. She closed her eyes as the flames grew wilder.

Wei WuXian choked, eyes widening, “They- alive?” he turned to his husband, “jiejie died burning- alive?”

Lan Wangji offered no words, just cupping his husband's face softly and wiping the tears.

“To fight”

They were back to Wei WuXian. He opened his eyes, gasping in shock. His eyes were frantic and panic and he forced himself up. Reaching over, Wei WuXian pulled out a needle, movement returning. He then threw it aside and got to his feet stumbling, grabbing his dizi and running out of the cave.

Wen Qing now understood the horrified expression from earlier when she used her needles. She smiled softly, “I’m sorry I used my needles before to knock you out,”

Wei WuXian just nodded.

“To fight!”

Koi Tower again, this time Wei WuXian was staring into the Fragrance Hall with a face of pain and tears. Staring back at him with familiar tears was Jiang Yanli dressed in white, cradling Jin Ling. The soldiers were coming, swords ready to attack Wei WuXian. He turned and ran, Jiang Yanli screaming after him, “A-Xian!!”

Jiang WanYin sat up, “What?”

Wei WuXian flinched, “I...why do you think I blamed myself for her death? If I had never let her see me...”

Jiang WanYin frowned, “If you hadn’t tried taking everything alone, nothing would’ve happened...No, it wasn’t your fault at all. You were framed,”

Wei Ying straightened a bit, *‘Framed...’*

“To the right, to the left”

The scene was similar to the first viewing. Wei WuXian was already playing the dizi, eyes red with betrayal and pain. Now they understood why.

“ We will fight to the death”

The scene showed Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi fighting on the rooftop. One draped in blank, the other bearing white. They contrasted so much, Wei WuXian wearing an expression of amusement, “I always knew we’d fight one day,”

“Wei Ying!”

Lan Zhan blanked, “How are you two married?”

Wei Ying was also thinking the same, glancing at Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian. The two of them exchanged eye contact, before Wei WuXian shrugged, “Lots and lots of pain. Also, Lan Zhan was the only one beside me when XuanYu brought me back...even after he learned it was me,”

“To the edge of the earth”

A pained scream echoed as they watched Jiang Yanli die...again.

Jiang Wanyin flinched, “How many times are we going to see that?!”

“Young Lady Jin was Wei Ying’s last rope, ” Lan WangJi pointed out. And everyone understood.

They would be seeing this scene a few times.

“ It's a brave new world,”

They watched as Wei WuXian screamed in grief, resentment switching and body shooting up. His eyes were bloodshot, tears clear in them. He looked truly insane as he held the throat of a disciple. He stared at the disciple, the bloody sword falling from the man's grip.

Wei WuXian snapped the boys neck, hand coated in blood as he threw the body away like a sack of grains. The cultivators around him screamed.

“Wei WuXian, back then you caused the deaths of the entire Jiang Sect, now you kill Lady Jiang as well and take out your temper on someone else!!”

“Wei WuXian, you killed her!”

“Wei WuXian you've caused the deaths of so many!”

“Wei WuXian you killed Jin ZiXuan and Jiang Yanli! You've made their son an orphan!”

“Wei WuXian you monster!”

The amulet burst and Wei WuXian took it out, activating without hesitation.

“You killed them?” Nie MingJue blinked.

Wei WuXian shook his head, “But I should’ve,”

His eyes traveled to Wei Ying who was silent as a mouse expression guarded but also conflicted.

“From the last to the first”

Resentment was everywhere along with screams. The scene progressed again, this time, they saw Lan WangJi carrying Wei WuXian’s who robes were stained red and eyes dazed with tears dropping.

“Oh...” Lan WangJi muttered and Wei WuXian knew exactly what this was, eyes widening.

“Lan Zhan...”

“To the right,”

Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi we're in a cave, the latter kneeling in front of the former, eyes softened with worry, “Wei Ying, Wei Ying,”

“Get lost,”

Wei WuXian flinched and he grabbed Lan WangJi’s hands, “No, don't leave again,”

“to the left,”

The scene jumped again, Lan WangJi looked fearful now, “Wei Ying, Wei ying, what's wrong with your golden core? Wei Ying!”

“Get lost,”

“Wei Ying!” Lan WangJi begged.

“Get lost!”

Lan Xichen was feeling his heart pain for his brother and Wei Ying. He suddenly vowed to protect both of them and ensure their happiness.

“My core?” Wei Ying asked a bit startled, “What- what happened?”

The people of the future exchanged various looks, Jiang WanYin’s expression the worst. It was a mesh of guilt and rage. In the end, Wei WuXian just smiled, “Nothing big,”

“WangJi!”

Lan cultivators, elders and Lan Qiren and Lan Xichen stood there at the entrance of the cave. Lan Qiren was furious, Lan Xichen was looking devastated.

“WangJi! What are you doing?” an elder asked.

Lan WangJi glanced at them before turning to Wei WuXian, “Wei Ying, listen to me. Wei Ying, tell me what happened,”

“Get lost!!!” Wei Wuxian sobbed

The scene progressed again and Lan Xichen was looking defeated, the elders and Lan Qiren scandalized. An elder screamed, “WangJi!! Have you lost your mind!!!???”

Lan WangJi stood up slowly. He picked up Wei WuXian, leaning him against the back of the cave. He gave a soft peck on the males forehead, “i love you,”

“...get lost,”

Wei WuXian lost his shit, throwing himself into his husband's lap and hugging him tightly. Lan WangJi had already closed his eyes and hugged back just as right.

Lan Zhan and Wei Ying were frozen stiff.

Lan WangJi turned around, facing his sect and then, met his brothers gaze. Lan Xichen paled, “WangJi, don’t!”

Lan Xichen and Lan Zhan also felt their eyes widen. Lan Xichen suddenly recalled the discipline whips and gasped, “33 lashes...”

“We will fight to the death”

Bichen was unsheathed and pointed at the cultivators at the cave, a determined expression set.

Wei Ying jolted, “You...you pointed your blade at your family to protect...”

“And I would do it again,” Lan WangJi let that silence the room, Wei WuXian whimpering in pain and love.

“To the edge of the earth”

The scene progressed and Lan WangJi stood tall as elders were groaning on the floor around him. Only his brother and uncle hadn't moved. Lan WangJi glanced at them, “Brother, Uncle,”

“WangJi, you fool!” Lan Xichen yelled, “Do you even know what you just did?!”

Lan WangJi walked to Wei WuXian, picking him up. The male had fallen unconscious at one point. Lan WangJi slashed at another end of the car, making another entrance. He then looked to his brother, “I will receive my punishment,”

He stepped on Bichen and left.

Wei Ying suddenly thundered, “Lan WangJi!! You are not to do something that stupid ever again!!”

Lan Zhan looked at Wei Ying startled, seeing the younger with a fierce glare of pain, “Do not ever turn your sword against family for me, no matter the relationship that forms in the future,”

Lan Zhan could not find it in himself to even nod, so he just turned away.

The juniors were frozen. Lan SiZhui choked, “But- the punishment for this would be exile, but they wouldn't exile Baba,”

Lan JingYi gasped, “The discipline whip. One lash for each elder,”

All four of them exchanged a look. They all remember the “punishment” Jiang Wanyin told Jin Ling about. The one Grandmaster Lan had blamed Wei WuXian about. Now they were understanding *why* .

“It's a brave new world”

They saw Wei WuXian being set down on the bed, Lan WangJi standing over him with a soft expression. He then sighed, “Wei Ying,”

“It's a brave new world”

Jiang Cheng was holding a young baby in his arms, tears falling down his face. Jin Ling, the baby, was asleep. Jiang Cheng choked a bitter laugh, “Together forever, huh Jie, WuXian?”

“It's a brave new world”

They were in Gusu. Lan WangJi was kneeling, robes open to reveal his back. Lan Qiren stood in front of him, pain and disappointment in his eyes. Lan Xichen was being held by disciples, tears of regret and frustration being held back.

The elder raised the whip and as he cracked it downwards, the scene shifted away back to Wei WuXian, who was now awake but looked half dead.

Ouyang Zizhen finally said it, “this one viewing is showing everything,”

“Because it's about war, ” Grandmaster Lan explained, “Sunshot Campaign. And the one against A-Xian,”

“I do believe in the light”

Wei WuXian stared down at an object in his hand. It was a silver bell with a purple tassel. A tear dropped from his face as Wei WuXian clenched it, teeth grinding together.

“Raise your hands into the sky,”

The scene changed to show the black dizi with a red tassel landing on the floor beside a hand that bore an amethyst ring.

“The fight is done, the war is won,”

The scene changed again, showing Jin GuangYao walking over to his father with a prideful smile. He then laid out a bunch of papers, “Young Master Wei’s manuscripts. And, the remaining half of the seal,”

Wei Ying frowned, “I don’t think I like your brother anymore Peacock,”

“Oh, I never liked him to begin with,” Jin ZiXuan grumbled.

“Lift your hands toward the sun,”

The scene suddenly showed Nie MingJue walking into a room, his bedroom most likely. Only to barely avoid something thrown at him. He looked startled, staring at Nie Huaisang who had tears running down his face, fury in his eyes, “What did you do?! You killed Wei-Xiong!!!”

“Huaisang, the boy that was your friend died a long time ago. We killed a demonic cultivator,” Nie MingJue sighed, “You shouldn’t have been keeping contact and sending him supplies anyway! Do you think I didn’t know?”

Nie Huaisang grabbed something else and threw it, “You idiot!! You utter idiot!! You killed my best friend!!! You killed a broken man!!! You killed someone who just wanted to be left alone with his family!!! You killed the one person who understood me!!! You killed a victim of war!!!!”

Wei Ying and Wei WuXian both felt their eyes widened. Wei WuXian muttered, “Oh, Nie-xiong...”

Wei Ying ran over to Nie Huaisang, tackling the other in a hug, Jin ZiXuan just barely managed to move away to one end of the seat in time, “Nie-Xiong!!!”

“Toward the sun,”

Lan Xichen looked down with hesitation, before pulling himself together. He then walked into a building, looking at the male laying on the bed, the bandages on his back red from the blood. Lan WangJi shifted, placing down the scroll and weakly managing to move his head, tone hard, “Brother,”

“WangJi...” Lan Xichen paused.

Lan WangJi narrowed his eyes, “What is it?”

Lan Xichen closed his eyes and gently fell to his knees. He reached up and brushed aside the black hair, saying with a careful tone, “There was a siege at the Burial Mounds,”

Lan WangJi froze, staring at his brother. The cold mask was beginning to crack.

“...Young Master Wei has died,”

”(It's the moment of truth and the moment to lie)”

Lan WangJi felt something in him break and the wounds on his back were suddenly non-existent. He lurched up, Lan Xichen shooting up, “your back! WangJi do not-” he was thrown back when his brother, his little brother, shoved him as hard as he could

manage with the marks on his shoulders and upper arms. Lan Xichen was startled, falling to the and meeting a gaze filled with betrayal and pain. Lan WangJi's voice shook, "You...you killed him..."

"I-"

"No," Lan WangJi stopped suddenly moving again, stumbling to his feet, blood leaking. A robe was shucked over his body and Bichen was grabbed. Lan Xichen shot up again, "WangJi, stop!! You won't find anything! There's not even a body left!!"

Jiang Yanli paled and whimpered, "A-Xian!!!"

Wei Ying was suddenly back to his siblings, hugging his sister tightly to assure her that he was here. He was fine.

That made Lan WangJi more angry and he used the hilt of Bichen, slamming it into his brother's chest, grief and denial locked in an expression of fury, "Sect Leader Lan,"

Lan Xichen felt his breathing hitch. He loved his brother, he loved his brother to the heavens and back. He wanted to protect his brother. He was proud to be the older so he could give his baby brother a shoulder free of burdens. But this...he never wished to see such an expression on his brother. And it hurt when he recalled that that anguished betrayal was targeted at *him*.

"Didi...your back-"

"And who's fault is that?" Lan WangJi snapped, taking no mind in the way his brother went stiff, blood draining from his face.

Lan WangJi left the jingshi.

Wei WuXian tilted his head back, blinking furiously. But a few tears cascaded as he whimpered, “Lan Zhan, you idiot. You loving idiot,”

Lan WangJi just hummed, his heart twinging as he relived this. He regretted some of the words...but at the time, his sect was wrong. His sect was so wrong and despite wanting to excuse them for being his family, he couldn't. He couldn't ignore the flaws. There was a reason he taught the juniors.

“Toward the sun,”

The scene showed Lan WangJi flying on Bichen, sweat on his face from the exertion. He landed down in front of a path and began to walk. He went as fast as he could, stumbling and gripping the dead trees. He yelled out, “Wei Ying! Wei Ying! Wei Ying!”

Wei Ying gripped his sister tighter, feeling himself start to shake. Jiang Yanli felt it too and she lowered herself to the ground, Wei Ying managing to get even closer to his sister as she held him protectively. Jiang Cheng glanced down at the scene with pained eyes.

“(It's the moment of truth and the moment to lie)”

Lan WangJi searched and found nothing. He screamed out into the dark landscape, everyone except Lan WangJi himself, wincing.

It felt wrong to hear the second jade scream. To have such anguish. For his self control to be so broken. Lan Zhan was beginning to understand why he changed the way he did. And for some reason, he couldn't find it anywhere in himself to be frustrated anymore. It was acceptance and understanding. He loved Wei Ying.

The moment the thought hit him he stilled. Lan WangJi had been watching his younger self, smiling knowingly on the inside.

The scene progressed again, this time Lan WangJi was staring at a tree, eyes wide. He reached into the trunk and picked up a little boy, no older than the age of four or five. Lan WangJi checked the boys face and muttered, “A-Yuan,”

All eyes from the past snapped towards Lan SiZhui, who smiled awkwardly, “I did tell you before I was a Wen and my father brought me to Gusu, bestowing me his name,”

“Toward the sun”

The scene shifted again, Lan WangJi was back at Cloud Recesses, bleeding through his robes. His face was ridden with pain and exhaustion. Little A-Yuan was in one arm, Bichen in the other. When he passed through the barrier and walked into the main area, disciples rushed to tell the elders and Lan Xichen. Lan WangJi went straight to the healers ward and spoke coldly, “Please send a healer to the Jingshi,”

Another shift and Lan WangJi was staring down at his Uncle, one hand clenched into a fist, the other stroking the hair of the sleeping child, “I will care for him like he is mine,”

“But he’s not,” Lan Qiren sneered.

“(It's the moment to fight, the moment to fight)”

“And? Will you kill this child because he has the name Wen? Because his parents were killed by the very same sect Lan Xichen is sworn brothers with? Will you kill him because he had no one else left to protect him except Wei Ying!? Well, Uncle?! Will you kill A-Yuan?!” Lan WangJi glared at both his uncle and his brother, who had been standing silently in the corner.

Lan Qiren blinked, glancing at the child. He sighed, “He can’t keep the surname,”

“I’ll give him mine,” Lan WangJi announced. It was not a question.

“The war is won,”

“Baba...” Lan SiZhui whispered, Lan WangJi smiling, “My son,”

Wei WuXian had turned back to see, smiling lovingly and reaching with one hand to caress his husbands cheek, “You’re too good for me,”

Lan WangJi quickly took the hand and kissed it, “Nothing is too good for Wei Ying,”

“To the right, to the left,”

The scene changed rapidly to show a familiar scene that had happened just last year for the people of the past. It was the Waterborne abyss in Caiyi Town. They watched as Wei WuXian flew on Suiban, grabbing a disciple who was trapped.

“SU SHE?!?!” Multiple voices of the future screamed.

Lan Jingyi erupted,, “That bastard owes Senior Wei his fucking life!!!!”

“JingYi, ” Lan WangJi scolded, but much to everyone's shock, gave no punishment.

Lan Zhan’s eyebrow twitched.

“At this point, who doesn’t owe Wei WuXian their life,” Wen Qing looked at Wei WuXian, who seemingly blanked at the statement.

“We will fight to the death,”

They saw Wei WuXian suddenly fall into the water. They watched as the black hairs of the water corpses moved towards Wei WuXian, wrapping around him and pulling him into the center.

“To the edge of the earth,”

Another progression, they were at the archery contest. Wei WuXian was walking around when he saw a boy, Wen Ning, shooting arrows and hitting the targets perfectly. Wei WuXian’s eyes widened, impressed.

“Woah!!!” Wei Ying, who had released his sister slightly to see again, exclaimed, “Wen Ning! You’re amazing! You should try in the archery contest, I’m sure you’ll be the only Wen that can shoot!”

Jiang Fengmian also agreed, “A-Xian is right, Young Master Wen, you are talented,”

Jin ZiXuan and Jiang Cheng also, reluctantly, admitted, adding their own comments about technique and good form. Lan Xichen smiled, “It would be an honor to try and go against you, Young Master Wen,”

The boy flushed under the praises.

“It’s a brave new world,”

Another switch, this time the Wen’s burning down Cloud Recesses, Wen Xu leading them. Lan Xichen was seen sneaking away, glancing back with confliction and hesitation, before running away.

Lan Qiren understood, “He ran away with the ancient texts,”

“Yes, he did,”

“From the last to the first”

This time, they saw about 20 disciples from each sect, including the heirs standing together and glaring up at Wen Chao, who was smiling down at them wickedly. The children bristled as soldiers moved around and collected their spiritual swords.

Nie MingJue’s fingers twitched, “What is that?”

“The indoctrination. Wen’s wanted to teach us and have the sect heirs as hostages. They took our swords. If it happens again, bring fake swords, trust us, do not bring real swords. Or if you are, hide them somehow,” Jiang WanYin explained with annoyance, “This was also the last time anyone who didn’t live in Lotus Pier saw ShiXiong before he came back as a demonic cultivator,”

“To the right, to the left,”

This time, the disciples were all in a cave, fighting against the Wen’s. They saw Wei WuXian stop the fight by taking Wen Chao hostage, holding the sword against the second heir’s neck.

Yu ZiYuan snapped, “Wei WuXian! You reckless idiot! Are you trying to bring attention to the YunmengJiang Sect?!!”

Wei Ying just blinked at her, truly unsure of what to respond with. He then settled quickly on, “I haven’t done anything yet, though,”

Yu ZiYuan switched her gaze to the future Wei WuXian, who met it, “That’s why the Wen Sect attacked! Because you directly threatened their heir!”

“The Wen Sect would’ve-”

“Apologies, Madam Yu for this one’s careless mistake,” Wei WuXian bowed his head and saluted, effectively cutting Jiang WanYin off, the sect leader (and the four jiangs of the past) startled by the sentence.

“We will fight to the death,”

This time, only Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian were in the cave. Lan WangJi was holding a string wrapped around a monster’s neck, while Wei WuXian, as the scene showed them, was stabbing it from the inside using a sword.

“To the edge of the earth,”

The scene changed to show Lotus Pier burning, dead bodies of the disciples and leaders making the three children pale.

Jiang Cheng suddenly shook his head, “How are we supposed to even look at the shidi’s after this?”

“It’s a brave new world,”

Wei WuXian was sending a blindfolded Jiang Cheng off.

“It’s a brave new world,”

Wei WuXian was held by his hair as Wen Chao laughed like a maniac, forcing Wei WuXian to stare into the abyss. He then leaned down and whispered, “Let’s see if you can keep smiling,”

He pushed Wei WuXian off the sword and into the Burial Mounds.

“Wen Chao!!!” Jiang Cheng roared.

Jiang Yanli’s gaze also hardened and she looked to Jiang Cheng, “A-Xian will not fall into it. Lotus Pier will not fall this time,”

Yu ZiYuan and Jiang Fengmian exchanged a glance, before nodding at their daughter’s who’s face was uncharacteristically protective and strong. Jin ZiXuan was staring with slight awe and surprise as Jiang Yanli looked at Wei Ying, “A-Xian, you’re a genius, you can invent things. If we put you in charge of defences, can you do it?”

Wei Ying nodded firmly, “Yes!” he then glanced at the three Lan’s, “I can make things for Cloud Recesses as well, if you would like,”

Lan Qiren was about to speak, but Lan Zhan beat him and bowed his head, “That would be helpful, Wei Ying,” he turned to his brother, “When we get back, we must speak with Father and have the ancient texts all copied onto extra scrolls,”

Lan Xichen’s eyes lit up with determination and hope, nodding, “Uncle, you can manage the Elders?”

Lan Qiren nodded, “I will take care of them and if my brother need more persuasion,”

The people of the future exchanged a glance of surprise and spark of hope. Even Wei WuXian seemed slightly more optimistic.

“It’s a brave new world,”

The Sunshot Campaign began to flicker, various battles showing, before settling on the scene of Wei WuXian walking into camp beside Jiang Cheng and Lan WangJi.

“A brave new world,”

Wen Ruohan was dead, Meng Yao killing him.

“The war is won,”

Wei WuXian shoved Jiang Cheng away, using half of the amulet and all his puppets and resentment turned on him

“The war is won,”

The juniors seethed. Multiple glances were sent towards Wei Ying, who had moved, but only adjusted back to sit on the seat. Other than that, his face was extremely calm, despite just seeing his death again.

The scene was suddenly something they hadn’t seen before. There were only two people, Lan Xichen and Jin Guangyao. The latter was missing an arm, blood dripping from his mouth and his chest where the clean blade of Shuoyue was impaled. Lan Xichen had stabbed Jin Guangyao.

“A brave new world,”

The scene dropped back into darkness.

The room was silent, as if unsure if that was truly the end. Jin Ling finally cleared his throat, “So...I guess that covers everything about what happened to Daijiu after the Sunshot campaign, at least the big events,”

Wei WuXian nodded, before clapping his hands twice, “I have to admit, I am impressed with the array you little ones and Uncle managed to create. And the one Shidi made which brought back my wonderful husband to me,”

“Husband,” Wei Ying and Lan Zhan both repeated blankly, gazes turning to them.

Wei Ying glanced at Lan Zhan, before frowning. He then opened his mouth about to speak, but shut it again. He was so confused. He didn’t know how to react to this. Sensing the struggle, Wen Qing decided to ask questions, “What happened with A-Ning?”

Wei WuXian understood and explained, “A-Ning was killed, well sort of. He still had one final breath and only his spiritual cognition was missing. I used resentment out of grief and regret and made him a fierce corpse. Then after he kind of went beserk, which by the way, is understandable. A-Ning is a timid boy who lets people step all over him, but in his heart there’s malice, which awakened when I revived you, anyway, back to the man point. You killed a few guards, I managed to get you to stop. I busted the Wen’s out of the camps, took you all the Burial Mounds which became our home for about two-ish years. And about a few months into living in the Burial Mounds, I managed to bring back A-Ning consciousness so he became a sentient fierce corpse. He does however, respond to my dizi. Which is sort of what happened with Jin ZiXuan,” he took a breath seeing Jin ZiXuan stiffen a bit and Madam Jin’s expression darken, “You listened to a flute that told you to attack and kill ZiXuan and ZiXun, which you did. Not that I blame you for Zixun, that fucking prick ambushed me when I was on my way to A-Ling’s one month celebration and had the nerve to break the present and say I cursed him, which I did not! I barely left Yiling at all, let alone the Burial Mounds and-”

“Airen,” Lan WangJi said humored, “You’re rambling,”

Wei WuXian blinked, before grinning sheepishly, “So that’s why my throats hurting again,”

Lan SiZhui pulled out a bottle from his sleeve and threw it to Lan WangJi, who caught it. He glanced down, confused, “What are these for?”

“Me, who else?” Wei WuXian told him, glancing at Jin ZiXuan, “So...you killed me? Or did you not kill me? Who killed me?”

Lan JingYi answered, “Technically, three people killed you. Your father, who wanted Senior Wei’s power at any cost. Jin Guangyao, who was the one who told you about Jin ZiXun ambushing Shixiong and you went to stop it. He also had the intention of killing you or at least making it unable for you to be sect leader. Finally, the man who played the flute and managed to perfectly frame it on Senior Wei was none other than, wait for it,” he paused for dramatic affect, Jin Ling rolling his eyes, “JingYi stop being dramatic!”

“Oh be quiet!” Lan JingYi playfully shoved the sect leader, before spreading his hands out and exclaiming, “Su She!”

Lan Qiren, Lan Xichen, and Lan Zhan jerked, all three of them snapping, “What?”

Wei WuXian took over, speaking with bitterness, “Su She has an unhealthy obsession with Lan Zhan,”

Wei Ying did not feel something bitter coil around his heart, he did not- fuck, yes he did. He definitely did. He was startled, turning to his sister for help, only to see her already looking at him and giggling amused behind her sleeve. Even Jiang Cheng was smirking at him, “Someone’s jealous,”

Lan Zhan looked at Wei Ying, who flushed and screamed, “I AM NOT!”

Lan Zhan should not have felt pride, but he did. It was scary for a few moments, before Lan Zhan accepted it. It seemed that was something he would learn well here, accepting things.

Lan Wangji didn’t bother to hide his smirk, glancing at Wei WuXian who smiled with a pretty blush, “You do know that Su She is dead, correct?”

“Yeah, I know. I saw him die,” Wei WuXian pouted playfully, “Doesn’t mean I can be jealous. You’re jealous of everyone, even-” Wei WuXian laughed softly as he was silenced by lips on his.

Lan Zhan and Wei Ying flushed, both of them staring at the floor with equal concentration. Jiang WanYin rolled his eyes, before glancing at Lan Xichen, “Young Master Lan, it would be best to be extremely careful of Su She. He left the Lan sect and formed his own, the MolingSu Sect using Lan teachings-”

“But they’re terrible!” Lan JingYi seethed, “It’s an insult to our sect to even play the zither’s they use. Its disgusting!”

“Do not talk behind others backs,” Lan Qiren snapped.

“Oh, Master Lan, he isn’t. He tells this in front of those from MolingSu as well,” Lan SiZhui sighed, with amusement.

Ouyang Zizhen snorted as memories bubbled in his mind. He then shook his head, turning to Grandmaster Lan, “Grandmaster Lan, perhaps we should take a small break for any thoughts and questions...if anyone would like to have conversations with someone else, they can do so now. Then we can figure out what to view next,”

Grandmaster Lan nodded, “That sounds good,”

“Where would we even go if we wanted to talk?” Jin ZiXuan raised an eyebrow, “Its a black abyss!”

“No, a black abyss is what I get thrown into in a year or so,” Wei Ying corrected.

Nie Huaisang looked at his friend strangely, “You are way too calm about your own death for it to not be considered concerning,”

“Sect Leader Nie didn’t seem that concerned either,” Wei Ying defended.

Jiang Wanyin thought for a moment, before his hands glowed purple. He then walked to the center, closing his eyes and visualizing. This dreamspace worked on them, from the future. They controlled it, they could make things appear and disappear. He let out a burst of power, the black void falling away to reveal a familiar outdoor pavilion.

Jiang Yanli startled, “Oh! We’re in Lotus Pier now,”

“Yeah, now you guys can go and roam for a while, I suppose. I created the entire sect complex, including the private docks and training field...” Jiang WanYin explained.

Jin Ling suddenly inhaled sharply with a pained gasp, drawing all attention. Jiang WanYin and Wei WuXian fretted, the older asking softly, “A-Ling? Are you alright?”

Jin Ling opened and closed his mouth like a fish, before suddenly stumbling up and towards his uncles. He grabbed both their hands and inhaled shakily, “You both told me stories of A-Niang...you said she would make you Lotus and Rip Soup,” he watched as both his uncles froze, eyes widening with realization, “A-and you both told me the cooks don’t make it like my mother did and- and- we’re here, and I’ve never had it and you both haven’t had it for years- but I’m sorry- but my mother is here and-”

Jiang Yanli had already stood up with a pleasant smile, “I can make some for everyone,” she glanced towards the Lan’s, “A-Xian told me the GusuLan Sect eats mostly vegetarian food,”

Lan Xichen smiled softly, standing up and bowing, “Thank you for your consideration, Maiden Jiang. We mostly eat vegetarian, but we aren’t strict about it. You can make your usual recipe,”

Jiang Yanli smiled and turned to Jin Ling, “Would...you like to join me?”

Jin Ling’s eyes lit up, before glancing at Jin ZiXuan, “Can...A-Die come as well?”

“No!” Wei Ying and Jiang Cheng both snapped and Jin Zixuan glared at them, before looking at Jin Ling and shrugging, “Sure, I can tag along,”

“WHAT?!” Jiang Cheng and Wei Ying screamed, Yu ZiYuan having enough and whacking both of them on the backs of their heads, “Stop screaming!”

Jiang Yanli smiled at Jin ZiXuan and led the way, the three leaving the group first. Jiang WanYin sat down, glancing at his brother and brother-in-law, “You know...you two could, hypothetically, go to Shixiong’s room and-”

“Shidi!” Wei WuXian hissed, “Your parents are here along with my in laws! Are you insane?”

Lan WangJi smiled, before it faded and he spoke softly, “Airen, why are you constantly drinking tea and having medicine?”

Wei WuXian’s expression turned wounded and he turned away, “I...”

Grandmaster Lan stood up, “WangJi, come with me,”

Lan WangJi glanced at his uncle and then at his husband. Wei WuXian felt it and nodded, even though it was reluctant, “Just...just please come back quickly,”

Lan WangJi nodded, “I’ll be back before the soup,”

He pecked the other’s lips, before standing and walking with his Uncle away. Jiang WanYin moved to sit beside his brother. The three remaining juniors had been dragged to the floor by Wei Ying, Jiang Cheng, and Nie Huaisang, and Wen Ning, who Wei Ying grabbed along, all of them sitting and the people from the past trying to learn things. Wei Ying felt a gaze and glanced over to meet Lan Zhan, smiling as he motioned the other over, “Lan Zhan! Don’t be shy, just sit here!”

Lan Zhan did not know why he caved in, but suddenly he was sitting beside Wei Ying, the group in a circle and beginning to chatter. Lan SiZhuai and Lan Zhan were the most silent, pardon for Wen Ning who had been forced into every conversation by Wei Ying, who also managed to, at one point, get Lan SiZhui into it and pull out responses from Lan Zhan. They were really talking about useless things, like information about the sects in the future and learning about the three from the future. One thing that got matching reactions was when they learned the number of Lan rules in the future.

“4000 rules!?!?” Nie Huaishang and Wei Ying shrieked, Lan Zhan also blinking and furrowing his brows, “Why are there 1000 more?”

The two Lan’s shrugged, but then Ouyang Zizhen grumbled in disdain, “What do you mean you don’t know? Just tell them, its cause of senior wei. After he died, the world still used his name as a scapegoat for things. A massacre of an entire sect would’ve been blamed entirely on Senior Wei had Xiao XingChen not descended from Baoshan Sanren’s mountain and caught the real culprit,”

Wei Ying stilled, sharing at glance with Jiang Cheng. The change was obvious for the other three to detect so they all watched as Wei Ying glanced backwards at the Lan Qiren and the Jiang leaders, before lowering his voice, “Xiao Xingchen? Someone who trained from my grandmother as well?

Lan SiZhui nodded, “Senior Wei tried not be too bummed about it, but after I found out who he was and a couple years had passed, I asked Baba about how he felt being not able to meet Xiao Xingchen-”

“What do you mean?” Wei Ying cut in.

“Xiao Xingchen descended at the age 17, a year exactly after your death,” Lan JingYi explained, “He traveled with his friend Song Lan, they had a pretty tragic thing and we don’t like to talk about it, despite Yi City being where the four of us became a quartet, but the entire thing was painful,”

Ouyang Zizhen sniffled, “I still get tears thinking about Lady A-Qing,”

“Anyway,” Lan SiZhui moved on, “Xiao Xingchen died either a year or two before Senior Wei was brought back,”

Wei Ying slumped, “Oh...” he then brightened again, “Then...I’ll die later! I’ll meet my mother’s shidi first!”

Jiang Cheng scowled, “You’re not dying regardless!”

Wei Ying glanced at his brother and shrugged, “i don’t know. As far as I’m concerned, I died once when Wen Chao threw me into the Burial Mounds and another time when the backlash happened,”

For a few moments everyone stared at Wei Ying. He felt it and pretended not to notice, shuffling around his sleeve for something. He faked a huff and pretended he didn’t find what he was looking for, when he wasn’t actually looking for anything. He turned to his big self and called joyfully, “Hey! Big Me! Can I play the dizi?”

“I don’t even have-” he paused when Jiang Wanyin waved his hand and the black bamboo flute summoned in his palm.

Wei Ying shot up, picking it up before Wei WuXian could process. He turned around and whistled, “I thought it was a really expensive flute, but its just a piece of bamboo refined and spelled to last long,”

Wei WuXian sighed as the others also stood up, glancing at the flute. Jiang Cheng poked it carefully, before saying, “What’s it called?”

Wei WuXian blinked, before answering, “...chenqing,”

Lan Zhan looked up, “Chenqing?” he glanced at Wei Ying, “It is much better than Suiban,”

Wei Ying glared, “Suiban is a wonderful name!”

“Its ridiculous,” Lan Zhan disagreed.

“Whats ridiculous is how Jiang-Xiong and I never noticed Wei-xiong rambled about Second Young Master Lan like a lovesick maiden,” Nie Huaisang stated.

Wei Ying and Wei WuXian flamed, screaming, “Shut up!!” as Jiang Cheng and Jiang Wanyin burst into laughter.

Wen Ning asked shyly, “Why did you call it C-Chenqing?”

Wei WuXian glanced at the boy, before gently reaching out and taking the flute. His eyes dazed and he ran his fingers against it softly, Jiang Wanyin’s demeanor softening and wrapping an arm around his brother, who leaned into him. Wei WuXian explained, “I crafted Chenqing in the Burial Mounds to help me with demonic cultivation...even when I was creating it, as in the cultivation, not the dizi, I knew that whatever I had before was,” he paused glancing at Jiang Wanyin and with the end of Chenqing tapped the male’s dantain, “different, or could not longer be mine, no longer mine to keep. My sect was gone, I repaid my debt to the Jiang Sect-” here Jiang Wanyin’s face turned cold, glaring at Wei WuXian and spitting, “You never had a debt,”

He turned his glare to Wei Ying, “You don’t have a debt to pay,”

Wei Ying just stared, before changing the topic, “Why’d you name it Chenqing though?”

“Because Chenqing was my new since I had to let go of the old,” Wei WuXian shrugged, “Chenqing. Old relationships. I think it fit well,”

Lan JingYi nodded, before his eyes shifted to something past the two future brothers. He sucked in a breath, “Senior Wei, you’re screwed,”

Wei WuXian furrowed his brows, turning back only to freeze at the pained and dark expression on Lan WangJi’s face, gold eyes fixed onto Wei WuXian. Lan WangJi spoke the moment they met the gaze, “Wei Ying, why? Why won’t you take care of yourself?”

Lan WangJi had crossed the distance, hands settling themselves on Wei WuXian’s waist, the shorter wrapping his hands around Lan WangJi’s neck. Wei WuXian tilted his head, “Lan Zhan, you don’t understand...I tried,”

Lan WangJi glanced at the others before exhaling. He pressed his lips to the other’s forehead, hovering there, “We can talk in private later,”

“...okay,” Wei WuXian hugged him tight, “Later,”

Later, they would talk. Later, they would probably shed tears. Later...they would leave their fate to the hands of the people of the past. Later.

However, now...just holding one another was enough.

****Rong = honor, glory. (ZiXuan is referred to as ZiXuan for the entirety of the series, but its well known that males have courtesy / common names. ‘Rong’ is the birth name I’ve given ZiXuan, as its clear to deduce that ‘ZiXuan’ is his courtesy name. This is also used in my other book)***

Chapter End Notes

Song: ‘This is War’ by Thirty Seconds to Mars

This chapter took me so long to write 🥹🥹🥹🥹.

Also, what should they react to next?

The basic plan is to also get into their individual futures, so for example WangXian, yunmeng trio, jiang yanli, zixuan and yanli, the three-zuns, lan wangji, Wei ying (obviously), some huisang as well.

The Sides of Kindness

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When Jiang Yanli, Jin ZiXuan, and Jin Ling returned, all three of them were laughing and smiling while carrying trays. Wei WuXian and Jiang WanYin both exchanged a glance, before smiling tenderly. Their teenage counterparts, on the other hand, were in disbelief.

“What the fuck?” Wei Ying hissed.

“We have to corner him,” Jiang Cheng declared and received a nod.

Jiang Yanli smiled at everyone, glancing around for somewhere to place the things. Ouyang Zizhen flicked his wrist, a large table showing in the center of the room. The three placed down the items, Jiang Yanli opening up the two pots. The smell of Lotus Root and Rib Soup made Wei WuXian and Jiang Wanyin freeze.

“Come around, there’s enough for everyone,” Jiang Yanli smiled softly.

“Maiden Jiang, let us help!” Lan SiZhui offered, a few ladles appearing in his hand and he walked over.

The four juniors motioned Jiang Yanli to step aside, the female standing beside Jin ZiXuan and giggling humored, “You four are very kind,”

Lan JingYi grinned, “We’ve heard stories about you from Senior Wei, sometimes Young Master Nie would give us stories as well. The infamous Jiang Yanli who could tame the Yiling Patriarch and Sandu Shengshou with a single glance or word,”

Jiang Yanli laughed louder at this. The bowls were being passed around, Ouyang Zizhen taking the bowls to the adults who were sitting down or talking amongst themselves. Almost

everyone had gotten a bowl now and were eating, multiple praises singing.

“Maiden Jiang, this is amazing!” Nie MingJue applauded.

“Thank you,” Jiang Yanli bowed her head, before seeing the two future versions of her brother’s just staring at the pot with hesitation.

Jiang Yanli smiled, taking two bowls and walking towards them. She held out the bowls, “A-Xian, A-Cheng,”

“Jie,” Jiang Wanyin whispered, taking the bowl.

Wei WuXian just stared at it, fingers flexing at his side. Lan WangJi walked to his side, “Airen, its okay,”

Wei WuXian exhaled, taking the bowl with shaky hands and sitting down. Jiang Wanyin also sat down, Lan WangJi staring at the two with concentration as he sipped the soup. Jiang Yanli smiled, stepping back slightly to take her own bowl. She saw both of them take the spoon and stir the soup, eyes fixed. Jiang Wanyin cleared his throat and took the first move. The moment it hit his mouth, tears swelled up, “Oh my god...”

Wei WuXian had also managed to raise the spoon, his body trembling as he took the bite. He sobbed, eyes shutting as tears cascaded. Then, both of them exchanged pained glances, before taking more and more bites of the soup. Their sister's soup. No mind to the tears that fell. No mind to the chokes and sobs that escaped. No mind that everyone was watching with pained smiles.

Wei WuXian placed the bowl aside after finishing it. It was the most food he had had in eight months and his stomach hurt, but he didn’t care. Jiang Wanyin noticed the empty dish, placing his own bowl to the table and watching his brother. He choked, “Shixiong...your stomach-”

Wei WuXian shook his head, crying softly, “Shjie, shjie,”

Jiang Yanli was at both their sides at once. She reached out and wiped the tears from both Wei WuXian and Jiang Wanyin. Both males stared at her, eyes dripping.

“You both have grown so well,” she spoke softly.

Wei WuXian sobbed and leaned into her hand, “Shjie...shjie...I’m sorry, im sorry,”

Jiang Yanli’s heart ached and she clicked her tongue, “XianXian, Shjie does not blame you. Shjie does not regret her choice. Shjie is only pained she couldn’t do more,”

Wei WuXian whimpered pitifully, before croaking, “Shjie did so much, Shjie is so much. XianXian is sorry he left, XianXian missed Shjie so much,”

Jiang Yanli glanced at Jiang Wanyin, who glanced at Wei WuXian with pain. He then looked at Jiang Yanli with a soft apologetic smile. Jiang Yanli only shook it away, bending down and cupping Wei WuXian’s face. She wiped his tears, brushing his hair the same she did to her Wei Ying. She didn’t know what was happening to Wei WuXian, but all she knew was that her brother needed her. And she would do that, without questions.

“Sh, sh, its okay. You have nothing to apologize for, A-Xian. Its all okay,” Jiang Yanli promised.

Jin Ling tilted his head, muttering to his sworn brothers and cousin, “Did...Daijiu just regress again?”

Lan WangJi glanced at the four, walking over with concern, “Again?”

Lan SiZhui smiled painfully, “Baba...the last 20 months have not been kind to A-Die,”

Lan WangJi lowered his eyes, but sighed, saying no more. Wei WuXian and Jiang Wanyin were both leaning their heads onto Jiang Yanli's shoulder, the two of them whimpering and crying painfully. Jiang Wanyin choked out, "Thank you, thank you for making this, thank you,"

"A-Xian, A-Cheng...I'm very proud of both of you," Jiang Yanli told them, "You both have gone through so much..." she glanced back to Jiang Cheng and Wei Ying, "I won't let you go through it again,"

The sentence snapped both of them back to the present matter, Wei WuXian rising up and sniffing, wiping away his tears. He didn't offer an apology, he knew he didn't need to say one. Jiang Yanli squeezed their hands before going back to her seat. Grandmaster Lan moved the table to the side of the pavilion, everyone returning to sit.

Yu ZiYuan took charge, "What's next?"

Seeing that the yunmeng brothers were still gathering their emotions, the juniors took over. Ouyang Zizhen shrugged, "Well, the song before showed the Sunshot Campaign, all of it. It even went into what happened with Senior Wei and the sects and the Wen remnants. There's nothing big we can dot into there,"

"Once we start showing your individual futures, I suppose details will be brought up, but right now its more important to get the big things out of the way," Lan SiZhui theorized and then glanced at Lan Xichen, "If I'm thinking correctly, one of the biggest things remaining is Jin Guangyao, Chifeng Zun, and Zewu Jun,"

Lan Xichen and Nie MingJue blinked confused. The sect leader frowned, "Us?"

Lan WangJi's gaze suddenly turned defensive, "You're right. I don't want my brother to go through everything Jin Guangyao did to him again,"

Wei WuXian nodded, “And I doubt Nie-xiong wants to become a vengeful mastermind, whose hands are dripped in blood,”

“Ah?” Nie Huaisang repeated, “My hands?”

“You got revenge on the person who was responsible for your brothers death,” Jiang Wanyin explained, he had heard of this when becoming sworn brothers with Nie Huaisang. He was a bit pissed off that the other was risking others lives, but he was also extremely impressed.

Nie Huaisang’s eyebrow twitched, “Didn’t Da-ge die from Qi deviation?”

“Technically,” Wei WuXian sighed tiredly and looked at Lan Xichen, “Zewu Jun...if we are to go into the story of your sworn brotherhood with Chifeng Zun and Lianfeng Zun, I need you to promise your brother and yourself, that you will not, under any circumstances, blame yourself or second guess your abilities,”

Lan Xichen stared in surprise, as did everyone else from the past. Lan Zhan’s eyebrows furrowed slightly and straightened up, “What happened to my brother?”

“Nothing happened to him...” Jin Ling said awkwardly, “Physically...”

Grandmaster Lan revealed, “Xichen...make the promise,”

Lan Xichen nodded, raising his hands and saluting, “I promise to myself and WangJi that I will not blame myself or second guess my abilities,”

Lan WangJi visibly relaxed, exhaling softly, “Good...” his hand glowed blue, “Good,”

He then activated the array, the scenery of Lotus Pier vanishing.

The scene gave way to Cloud Recesses, except it was night time and only one figure was present. He was draped in white, a beautiful white jade xiao tucked by his waist. In his hand was a lantern, Lan Xichen humming a soft tune to himself.

Gentle music began to play as they watched Lan Xichen light the lantern. He gazed at it for a few seconds before softly releasing the lantern.

Lan Xichen's voice sang softly *"Once called three Zuns,"*

"Oh, the emotions..." Nie Huaisang muttered painfully, and everyone agreed. Lan Xichen's voice was beautiful, but there was raw hurt and pain in his voice.

They watched as Lan Xichen stayed in his place, the viewers watching the lantern rise higher and higher.

The scene flickered towards the lantern to show the art, a peony and beast head. The Jin and Nie Sect motifs.

The scene softly turned back to show Lan Xichen on the ground, whose eyes were glossed over with pain as he watched the lantern rise higher and higher towards the stars. A figure in white approached behind him silently, his golden eyes flickering upwards towards the lantern, before falling back to Lan Xichen, who had yet to acknowledge him.

"In Zhongyuan Festival come back two ghosts,"

"When was this?" Grandmaster Lan asked.

"The night before Brother's marriage," Lan Wangji informed, remembering when he had found his brother mourning.

Lan WangJi walked forward, pausing his feet directly beside his older brother, who didn't even glance at him. The darker gold eyes of the Sect Leader stayed on the lantern that was becoming ever smaller.

"...do you still care about him?" Lan WangJi asked calmly.

"In a way," Lan Xichen exhaled, "Or perhaps I am grieving for the boy I thought I knew,"

"The boy that never existed,"

"The boy that was killed due to acts of judgement," Lan Xichen's voice remained soft as he corrected his younger brother's statement.

"Flowers bloom on different branches,"

Lan WangJi expression shifted for a few seconds, but then returned to his usual expression, "Your fiance once told me you would be here if I couldn't find you elsewhere,"

Lan Xichen's eyes tore down from the lantern at last, "If A-Xin's words led you to search for me, that means I am needed,"

Lan WangJi paused and he exhaled softly, "Huan-ge,"

Lan Xichen turned fully to his brother at the call.

Lan Xichen and Lan Zhan both blinked. It had been years since they used intimate and informal references to one another. Hearing it once more, made them both transported to memories of when they were still children.

“Palm prints have different venations,”

“A-Zhan,” Lan Xichen returned, dropping the formalities and taking in his brother’s expression. Hesitance. A common thing he noticed his brother had when talking to him. Lan Xichen’s heart ached slightly, but he smiled and reached forward, “A-Zhan, if there is something you have to say, you may tell me,”

Lan Wangji spoke carefully, “Why are you here? You are to be married tomorrow and yet you are out almost near curfew lighting a lantern,”

“I am to be married, aren’t I?” Lan Xichen smiled happily and Lan Wangji gave him a small glare, “While I am more than happy for you, I do ask Huan-Ge, what is he doing here?”

“Wake up from a long dream while feel at lost,”

“Respecting old friends,” Lan Xichen looked back towards the sky.

Lan Wangji also glanced to where the lantern had shrunk away. There was a pause before he spoke, “...I hate him, I always will. But if you must still have care for him...for the person you believe he would've been, had things been different, then I only hope that Huan-Ge finds himself at peace and walk with me to a brighter future. Tomorrow, you will be married to someone who loves you just as much as you love her, tomorrow is a step forward. I am not asking, nor am I telling you to abandon the past, for I cannot leave it either, the marks on my skin and my husband’s heartbeat a reminder. I only hope that Huan-Ge will trust himself to live fully again, with his wife, with the kids, with his brother-in-law, with me,”

“Holy *shit* ,” Jiang Wanyin blinked.

“That was so beautiful and emotional,” Jiang Yanli breathed out softly.

Lan Xichen, though he did not understand completely, smiled at the words. He had a feeling in the future, these words had stuck with him for quite some time.

With those words, Lan Wangji stepped back and turned from the clearing, leaving his older brother with his words.

Lan Xichen turned towards the moon, his brothers words repeated in his mind, a delicate expression on his face.

“Who comes back and who is gone are both my old pals,”

The scene faded away as the music turned a bit more intense from the soft gentle tone. The scenery changed to give way to three people. Two of which were in this room, the third dressed in gold robes and a black gauze cap on his head. They were bowing in front of incense, Nie Mingjue in the center of Lan Xichen and, as he was now, Jin Guangyao.

They all rose, Lan Xichen turning to the two with a calm smile, “From here, we are sworn brothers,”

Nie Mingjue gave a small quirk of the lips glancing at Jin Guangyao who smiled sweetly at them, “Then from now on, I suppose you are my Da-Ge and Er-Ge,”

Lan Wangji seethed at hearing the familiar reference to his brother from the snake. Wei WuXian glanced at the expression and shook his head with an amused smile.

They all rose to their feet, slatuing once more, before turning and walking out of the hall. As they stepped outside, Nie Mingjue took in a soft breath, “I suppose we are,” he glanced at Jin Guangyao about to add something, but Lan Xichen spoke up from ahead, “Why did you two stop? Don’t tell me you’re already bored,”

“Of course not,” Both males chorused, walking forward and standing on either side of the white-robed male.

Jin GuangYao said, “I wish I could stay longer, but Father wants me to plan the Phoenix Mountain Hunt and he wants it done a bit early to be prepared for...anything Young Master Wei might showcase,”

Nie MingJue raised an eyebrow, “Young Master Wei may have a unique cultivation technique, but he is not someone Jin Guangshan would be interested in, unless of course, he sees Young Master Wei as another poor human to traumatize,”

Wei WuXian and Wei Ying both felt the blood drain from their faces at the very thought. He wasn't the only person to feel horrified, everyone did. Wei Ying felt Jiang Yanli's grip dig into his arm. Yu ZiYuan's Zidian crackled as she growled, “He wouldn't dare,”

Jin ZiXuan looked green in the face, “Oh...heavens...”

Madam Jin turned to Wei WuXian, “Did that bastard ever come near you?”

Wei WuXian shook his head numbly, before breathing out, “Lan Zhan, I'm fine, please weaken your grip,”

“Da-Ge!” Lan Xichen hissed and Nie MingJue frowned confused, “What?”

Lan Xichen turned his gaze to Jin GuangYao and Nie MingJue followed, seeing the complicated expression on the youngest. He realized what had happened and his eyes narrowed, “Why are you looking so down? A-Yao, wipe that expression off your face. Your Father has acknowledged you and given you what you wanted, a place in Koi Tower. If you can't even handle hearing about your Father's actions, how are you supposed to even live there when you could probably stumble upon the man draped over by concubines?”

Jin GuangYao pulled another smile, “You are right, Da-Ge,”

Lan Xichen moved on quickly, “Plus, I’m certain Young Master Wei would be able to take care of himself should anyone try something like that on him,”

Jin Guangyao frowned, “Young Master Wei is a demonic cultivator, does that not alarm you both?”

Jiang Wanyin’s finger twitched, “He’s manipulating them not even an hour after officially becoming sworn brothers! Damned son of a prostitute”

Wei Ying glanced at Jiang Wanyin with a small frown, before turning his attention back to the scene.

Lan Xichen’s expression turned complicated, “It worries me deeply. I remember what Young Master Wei was like during his lectures at Gusu. The male he is now is too different and I fear for his health,”

“As long as he can behave, I don’t really care what he does,” Nie MingJue kept simple and then fixed Jin Guangyao, “No one should care, he’s part of the Jiang Sect and his reputation since he began his cultivation has been honorable,”

Wei WuXian couldn’t help but bark out a sarcastic laugh, “Where was this when I actually needed support?!”

“Hidden behind a blood grudge,” Lan SiZhui’s eyes darkened.

“Of course, it was,” Lan JingYi scoffed.

“Can’t count on the cultivation world for anything, can you?” Ouyang Zizhen added as Jin Ling laughed mockingly.

Neither of them cared that Nie MingJue was there with them, nor did they care that Nie MingJue was staring at them with confusion and slight irritation.

Jin Guangyao smiled tightly, “Yes, yes. I must go,”

The scene changed once again to show the golden towers of Lanling, the hundred of steps edged by the white peonies sparkling in the bright sunlight. Not too far, was a young male in brown robes and a familiar face they knew was Jin Guangyao, but he was younger meaning he hadn’t yet been given the name ‘Jin’ or ‘Guang’. This boy was still Meng Yao.

‘Hundreds of steps on Koi Tower,’

“Why is he singing?!” Grandmaster Lan protested as Jin- Meng Yao’s voice sang out.

Jin Ling on the other hand flinched as he heard the male sing, expression turning pained. His sworn brothers noticed at once, the three giving him smiles of comfort, Lan SiZhui patting the youngest’s back softly. Jiang WanYin glanced over and could only clench his fists in hate for the bastard son.

‘Like the way to the paradise’

The scene changed to see the same boy now in gold robes with a vermillion mark on his forehead. Jin Guangshan stood in front of the kneeling boy, a small smile on his lips, “From now on, you are a Jin. Jin Guangyao,”

Madam Jin seethed and whispered to her sworn sister, “I don’t know how you deal with it,”

Yu ZiYuan could not say anything, her eyes glancing towards the future version of Wei Ying. She and her husband had died, Wei WuXian had abandoned her children for the same people

who killed them. But her son was closer to Wei WuXian in the future than now. She was confused.

‘ Straighten my clothes calmly like in a dream ,’

The scene shifted to show a younger Meng Yao, standing in front of a beautiful woman. Her clothes were thin, a shawl covering her shoulders. She smiled softly at Meng Yao, straightening the cheap robes, “A-Yao, you should remain a good appearance. One day, your Father will come and save us from this life, you will see,”

Meng Yao tilted his head slightly, “Mother, you speak of Father and say the same thing, but he has not visited you once and he left us!”

Meng Shi chuckled, “Well, he is a cultivator, I am sure he is busy. How can a man forget his child? That is impossible,”

The words hit five boys in the heart. Ouyang Zizhen flinched a bit, Jin Ling giving his sworn brother a firm squeeze on the shoulder. Jiang Cheng grimaced a bit, lips curving downwards. Jin ZiXuan looked at the boy that was half-brother, a representation of their Father’s lack of care. The Twin Jade’s both tensed slightly.

Wei WuXian shook his head solemnly, “For all of his crimes, we cannot excuse the mindset he bestowed was because of his love for his Mother”

“A prostitute who bore a child,” Madam Jin sneered, “She was a fool,”

“She was a young girl swooned by words and hope out of a life that was ill to her,” Wei Ying’s words escaped before he could retract them, speaking with a soft frown, muttering softly, “She was promised more, she was promised love and safety. As young as she seems in this, along with the limited education prostitutes are even given access too, what else was she to do but accept the key that Sect Leader Jin gave her, unaware that there was no lock for it to fit into,”

Madam Jin looked at the boy with eyes wide and lips parted. She tried to refute, but nothing came out of her mouth. Jin ZiXuan glanced at his Mother and then at the boy on the screen, confliction clear.

Wei WuXian smiled painfully at little him, “Maybe you will fare off better than me,”

Lan WangJi and Jiang Wanyin felt their face’s darken.

‘Where the wave of flowers are chilling,’

The scene showed Meng Yao crying in front of Meng Shi, who lay on the thin bed, eyes closed. Her chest did not rise and fall with breathing, nor did the color that once painted her features blossom, instead faded away. Another woman stood behind Meng Yao, her own eyes softened in pain and grief.

Meng Yao lifted his head, whispering, “I will get Father’s approval, I will, Mother. I will make him regret not saving you sooner, I will do what you wanted. I will, I will, I promise,”

Madam Jin frowned deeply. Wen Qing sighed a bit, speaking aloud, “Madam Meng instilled the ideas that Sect Leader Jin would save them and accept him, she believed his words and in turn inflicted it upon her son who took it as a dying wish to complete,”

“Only he, nor Madam Meng, wasn’t aware that Jin Guangshan had habits and that he would not return, especially not for Meng Yao,” Grandmaster Lan finished.

“I mean,” Jin Ling spoke up, “He returned to the Mo village for Mo XuanYu,”

“WHAT?!” Multiple people screamed.

Jin ZiXuan looked at Wei WuXian, “You’re in my half-brother’s body?!”

Wei WuXian smiled wryly, “Yeah, it’s karma at its finest,”

Sisi’s expression behind softened worse, “A-Yao...Jin Guangshan is not-”

“I will Sisi! I will! Mother wanted me to have a Father, I will get his approval and he will accept me! I will do what she always wished for me!” Meng Yao stopped her, turning to glance back, “So what if he kicked me off last time I was there? So what if Madam Jin hates me? I will prove it to them! I may be a Meng, but there is Jin blood in my veins, no matter my distaste! He is my Father, I will be accepted!!!”

Wei WuXian and Wei Ying both stiffened painfully, Wei WuXian whispering, “Oh...shit...”

“ShiXiong?”

“Wei Ying?”

Wei WuXian glanced at the two males sitting beside him, Jiang Wanyin moving his chair closer to where it was practically a three person seat, except for the arm-rests in between the two brothers. Wei WuXian shook his head, “Nothing...nothing...”

He lifted his head to meet his younger self's eyes, seeing the same expression in the silver iris's. Acceptance was so difficult to achieve.

“A-Xian, are you alright?” Jiang Yanli whispered.

Wei Ying nodded, but said nothing else, nor spared her a glance.

‘Behave righteously and justice should be done,’

“Da-Ge!” Nie Huaisang cheered when he heard his brother sing.

Nie MingJue, a younger one, was walking through the main hall of the Nie Sect residence, Baxia strapped to his back. His expression was tired and dark, but also fierce. He walked with confident strides, the young boy gazing at the metal seat at the center of the room. With a breath, he walked forward and turned around, sitting down and gazing at the sect he now commanded. At once, the Nie disciples and Elders bowed, saluting and speaking in sync.

“To Sect Leader Nie!”

“Oh, I didn’t know Chifeng Zun was that young when he took over the sect,” Lan JingYi blinked.

“I was a teenager,” Nie MingJue informed them with a dark scorn.

“Oh, like ShuShu and Jin Ling and Bobo,” Lan SiZhui stated.

There was a small pause and Lan WangJi broke it with an awkward, “Yes...”

‘My unbreakable vows sound like thunder,’

Nie MingJue kneeled beside a crying Nie Huaisang, both of them staring at a tablet with their Father’s name on it. Nie MingJue lit held his brother’s hand and spoke firmly, “The QishanWen Sect will not go unpunished for Father’s murder, I swear it,”

Nie Huaisang sniffled, glancing at his older brother and nodding, “Da-Ge...don’t leave me so soon,”

Nie MingJue's expression turned complex, but nodded.

'Hit the wave of my sword til it reaches the sky,'

The scene shifted again to show Nie MingJue, older now, glaring at a group of cultivators, Baxia wedged into the wall of the stone walls of the cave. Meng Yao stood behind him, eyes wide in shock. Nie MingJue seethed, "Drinking the water he got for you while insulting him. Did you join my army to gossip?!"

The cultivators fell to their knees, shaking their heads. Nie MingJue wrenched Baxia free and turned to Meng Yao, "Meng Yao, from now on, you are my assistant and right hand!"

Meng Yao's lips parted in disbelief and Nie MingJue spat at the group again, "You should not bother yourself with such words of theirs,"

Meng Yao nodded numbly, before rushing to salute.

'Hit the edge, what seems hopeless may not be hopeless,'

They showed Meng Yao, dressed in Nie Sect robes, walking alongside Nie MingJue, who had a dark expression. Meng Yao was also looking guilty while carrying a couple scrolls, "Sect Leader Nie, you do not need to get involved with words of my heritage. They are not wrong,"

"What does birth have to do with anything?! So what if your Mother was a prostitute? She lived her life the way she could to survive! If it meant working in a brothel then so be it! We all bleed the same blood anyway! It's actions that matter and speak of your character, not your goddamn parents," Nie MingJue rolled his eyes.

Meng Yao's eyes were wide with unshed tears of awe, "S-sect leader Nie..."

The words seemed to hit multiple people of the past in the face.

The scene shifted again to show Lan Xichen, though he was slumped against a wall of a house, white robes wrinkled and torn. His hair was frizzled and his breaths came out tired and exhausted. Meng Yao was kneeling in front of the man, eyes covered in worry.

‘Ashamed to meet you on this lonely path,’ Lan Xichen’s voice sang once more.

Lan Zhan frowned, “When is this?”

“It must’ve been when Brother escaped with the ancient texts,” Lan Wangji informed.

The scene changed to show Lan Xichen waking up, this time in a house. He jolted up, dark gold eyes scanning the room. He quickly stood up, spotting his sword and xiao, grabbing both and unsheathed the sword quietly. He walked around, heading towards the door.

He heard footsteps near the room and pressed himself against the wall. When Meng Yao entered, he yelped at the same time, Lan Xichen moving forward and pointing the blade of Shuoyue at him, “Who are you? Where am I?”

“Zewu Jun,” Meng Yao seemed to relax upon realizing it was the man he had brought in, “You’re awake, that is good. I am not skilled in medicine and after catching news of your Sect’s condition, I realized you must be on the run and didn’t even attempt for a doctor,”

Lan Xichen’s demeanor turned confused and he frowned, though the sword did not move, “You know who I am?”

“Well...not at first. But I did notice the forehead ribbon and then I heard the rumors of the First Jade of Lan going missing after the QishanWen Sect stormed the Lan Sect...”
Meng Yao smiled awkwardly, “It was simple enough to piece together the puzzle,”

Lan Xichen nodded slowly, “And you are...helping me hide?”

Meng Yao nodded, “I couldn’t just leave you outside,”

Lan Xichen lowered his sword slightly, “And...may I ask your name?”

“Meng Yao,” Meng Yao smiled.

Lan Xichen blinked, sword lowering completely, “I...apologize,”

Meng Yao shook his head, “Ah, no need! It would be more concerning if you would not attack after waking up in an unfamiliar place while on the run,”

Lan Xichen cracked a small smile.

‘Grateful for your help, how lucky I am to meet you in this life,’

“Meeting Meng Yao was probably the unluckiest thing that happened to him,” Ouyang Zizhen frowned.

Lan Xichen didn’t understand, “He seems to have a good heart. He strives to complete his Mother’s wish, helped me when he could’ve easily turned me over and gave himself the benefits of such an act, and felt bad for allowing MingJue to help him stop gossips,”

The people of the past stared at Lan Xichen with looks of disbelief. Lan Wangji's expressions turned pained, "No, please do not make yourself trust him. Please,"

Lan Xichen frowned.

'Suddenly wake up from an old dream' Jin Guangyao's voice sang.

The scene shifted rapidly to show Meng Yao in the robes of the Qishan Wen Sect. Nie Mingjue, who is also kneeling in the hall in front of Wen Ruohan, dead bodies of Nie disciples behind him, killed by the guards that had been holding them. Nie Mingjue glares at Meng Yao with obvious scorn, "Do not touch it!"

Meng Yao smirked and picked up Baxia, slapping the blade a few times, "I wonder how many slaps it would take to shatter this?"

"THAT PIECE OF SHIT!!!!" Nie Mingjue screamed, shooting to his feet.

Ouyang Zizhen rolled his eyes, "Meng Yao is practically asking for Chifeng Zun to hate him,"

"Well, its between Chifeng Zun hating him or Wen Ruohan killing him right there," Wei WuXian pointed out, "Meng Yao only insulted Chifeng Zun and killed the Nie Sect disciples because he had to in order to keep Wen Ruohan's trust,"

"Of course," Wen Qing nods, "Between Chifeng Zun and Wen Ruohan, it's obvious in this situation which one you should please over the other in terms of your own survival,"

Nie Mingjue spat, "He didn't have to do that, nor touch my blade!"

"The more cruel he is to you, the more Wen Ruohan will trust him," Wen Qing argued, "It's a simple survival. Everyone in Qishan knows that between pleasing your own parents and Wen

Ruohan, you please Wen Ruohan so you and your family can live!”

‘You are far away and we haven’t met,’

The scene shows Meng Yao looking through papers at a desk. He hears the tent curtain open and footsteps, opening his mouth about to speak. His words stop when he sees a boy in gold enter the tent. It is Jin ZiXuan.

“Oh, this is going to be awkward,” Jiang Cheng mutters.

Jin ZiXuan looks at the boy for a second, obviously not recognizing him. He bows and speaks politely, “I am looking for Sect Leader Nie, do you know where I may find him?”

Meng Yao is unable to respond for a few seconds, before clearing his throat and looking down, “He...should be back soon. I can send him to you later if you would prefer,”

Jin ZiXuan shook his head, “No need. I can wait here,”

Meng Yao shuffled awkwardly, “Are you sure? I do believe it is best if I were to send Sect Leader Nie to you,”

Jin ZiXuan’s looks at him in confusion, before his eyes narrow, “Is this your way of kindly telling me to piss off? If it is, I would want to know you are before I decide,”

“It is precisely because of who I am,” Meng Yao blinked and then sighed, “I am Meng Yao, Jin ZiXuan,”

At once the expression changed on Jin ZiXuan’s face, turning into realization and awkwardness, “Oh...you are...my half-brother,”

“...yes,”

Jin ZiXuan nodded slowly, “I...have never met any of my siblings before,”

“You might have,” Meng Yao mutters.

Jin ZiXuan seems to pale a bit, “Oh fuck, you’re right,”

Meng Yao snorts, before hastily covering his mouth. Jin ZiXuan glances at him and then speaks carefully, “I should leave, shouldn’t I? Or else those rumors of you will get worse...”

Meng Yao blinks and then nods, “This is not the Lan Sect where gossip is forbidden,”

“Even the Lan Sect gossips. You’d have no idea the amount of gossip that spread amongst the guest disciples after Wei WuXian was expelled a couple years ago,” Jin ZiXuan deadpans.

“What?” Wei Ying and Wei WuXian both snap.

“Wei WuXian?” Meng Yao repeated and turned to the man in gold, “Sect Leader Jiang’s right hand who is presumed dead? The man he and Hanguang Jun are searching for?”

“Yeah,” Jin ZiXuan nods in confirmation, “He’s missing, dead is more likely, but no one wants to tell those two that. They’re extremely stubborn about this,”

“Wasn’t he thrown into the Burial Mounds?” Meng Yao knitted his eyebrows, “That’s what the latest information said, yes?”

Jin ZiXuan nodded again, “I won’t push it past Wen Chao to do it. Ever since he placed first during that archery contest in Qishan, Wen Chao hated him,”

“...that’s not fair,”

“No, it isn’t. But Wei WuXian is a complicated person with enough rumors about him. To be fair, I’m not that surprised the Wen Sect decided to throw him down into those mountains. He is- was a master of the six arts,”

Wei Ying’s mouth opened and closed, before turning to Jin ZiXuan, “Are you insulting or complimenting me?”

“Neither,”

“...he’s a servant’s son, right?” Meng Yao asked carefully.

Jin ZiXuan shrugged, “I don’t know and I don’t really care. I’m not too fond of him but his birth has nothing to do with it. He’s just annoying,”

“Okay, that was an insult,” Jin ZiXuan confirmed.

Wei Ying didn’t even react, only thinking about this. He couldn’t help but frown slightly, *‘Even a person who does not like him can look past his birth. But why is it the woman raising him cannot?’*

Meng Yao looked at Jin ZiXuan, about to speak, before a gold butterfly flew in. Jin ZiXuan touched it, before turning to Meng Yao and saluting, “Please hand these reports to Sect Leader Nie and tell them they are from me. I have some errands to run,”

Meng Yao took the paper and a small bow. Jin ZiXuan then left the tent.

***'Holding the frosty sword,'* Nie MingJue's voice sang as the scene shifted to show Meng Yao using Hensheng, a flexible soft sword, to kill Wen Ruohan and stand in front of the two sect leaders.**

He smiles, "Sect Leader Lan, Sect Leader Nie,"

'My blood is hot and the blade is cold,'

Nie MingJue face's twists into rage, "YOU-"

At once, Meng Yao's face turns into fear, "Wait- Sect Leader Nie, I can explain-"

Nie MingJue charges at him, Baxia raised. Lan Xichen flies forward blocking the hit, "MingJue, wait!!!"

"Xichen, move!!"

"Do you remember where I got the map of the Wen troops from?!" Lan Xichen spoke quickly.

Nie MingJue pauses and glances to Meng Yao, who is cowering behind Lan Xichen. Lan Xichen nods and the two blades lower slightly, "A-Yao was undercover for us and sending information. A-Yao did you not tell Sect Leader Nie this?"

"Zewu Jun, in such situation, it would've made no difference," Meng Yao muttered.

"You...you killed my disciples," Nie MingJue spat, "You mocked my Father's death in front of his killer and myself,"

Lan Xichen blinked and turned to Meng Yao with a confused and slightly alarmed glance. Meng Yao drops to his knees at once, “I did not have a choice! Anything else and I risked Wen Ruohan’s trust in me! I am deeply sorry for using your Father against you Sect Leader Nie, but in front of Wen Ruohan, the crueler to his enemies you are, the more he will trust you!”

“It’s terrible but perfect logic,” Lan SiZhui frowns.

***‘A warm chat with a few words,’* Lan Xichen sang as the scene dissolved to show the three males, Meng Yao now known as Jin Guangyao, sitting and drinking tea.**

Lan Xichen smiles, “What if we are to swear sworn brotherhood?”

The two males look at him in surprise. Nie MingJue than glances at Jin Guangyao, “It is something Xichen and I often discussed when we were younger, especially considering Huaisang and WangJi refused to come within one foot of each other,”

“That is not true!” Nie Huaisang defended, “We just didn’t click together as much as you and Xichen-Ge did,”

Lan Zhan nodded in agreement. Jin Ling looked surprised, “Wait- seriously? But in the future, Uncle Lan and Uncle Nie are quite close,”

“What?” The Lan and Nie brothers all chorused.

Wei WuXian snickers, “They talk a lot about poetry together along with Sect politics. The cultivation world appointed Lan Zhan as chief cultivator, but in order to balance the power, Lan Zhan announced he would share the position with Nie-Xiong,”

“What?” All the teenagers, excluding the Wen siblings and Jiang Yanli, chorused. Jiang Cheng pointed at Nie Huaisang, “He’s a chief cultivator?”

“Mn,” Lan WangJi nodded.

“Hence...after WangJi passed...” Grandmaster Lan spoke hesitantly, glancing at Wei WuXian, who just tightened his grip on Lan WangJi for a few seconds, “It was Sect Leader Nie who became chief cultivator. When we left, I believe he was still deciding who to share the position with,”

“I’m pretty sure he would’ve picked A-Die if he could,” Lan SiZhui muttered.

“He wanted to, that was his first choice,” Jiang Wanyin groaned, “But...you know...after he came to actually talk to ShiXiong about it...”

Wei WuXian grimaced at the reminder, “Look...even if I wasn’t where I was, I couldn’t take the position anyway. The cultivation world would go into uproar about the Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation and Supreme Lord of Evil running the cultivation world,”

Wei Ying closed his eyes at the titles.

“You are both sect leaders, I am not. Would it still be valid?”

“Status has nothing to do with sworn siblinghood,” Lan Xichen smiled kindly.

Nie MingJue looked at Jin Guangyao, “It’s trust,”

‘We lit three incense sticks,’

The scene showed the venetriad triad performing the sworn sibling ceremony once more.

Three voices sang together as the scene began to shift, showing the three males spending time together and smiling happily.

‘With me to spend the rest years of my life,’

Lan Xichen looked at Nie MingJue with a kind smile, “A-Yao is young, but his heart is good,”

Nie MingJue sighed, shaking his head, “I know he can be good, I know the boy I saw that day we first met,” he then looked at Lan Xichen with a stern gaze, “But people change and have multiple faces. You should know this considering the world sees your brother as aloof and distant, but you are greatly aware of how sensitive and passionate he is on the inside,”

“This is true,” Wei WuXian smiled confidently.

Lan Zhan glared at his brother, “Brother, do you tell Sect Leader Nie, everything?”

Lan Xichen opened his mouth slowly, “We...ramble to one another...about our brothers...and their lives....”

“What?” Nie Huaisang looked at Nie MingJue, who coughed awkwardly and looked away.

Jiang Yanli laughed delightfully, “Little brothers are quite fine to think about,”

Wen Qing gave a loud hum of agreement as well, “They’re complicated but adorable,”

Lan Xichen grinned widely, “Yes! Lady Wen, Maiden Jiang, you understand us!”

“What!?” The younger siblings all spoke again.

‘With me to share each others weal and woe,’

The scene showed Lan Xichen looking tired, “Ah...WangJi is too stubborn to be swayed and Young Master Wei has already defected to the Burial Mountains. There is not anything I say that seems to reach him. But everytime they meet, it seems to get worse,”

“Young Master Wei has made his choice,” Nie MingJue shook his head, “He seems to be blind to the fact of how his choice is impacting those around him,”

Wei WuXian and Wei Ying both flinched. Lan WangJi glared at Nie MingJue on the screen, wrapping his arms around his husband and placing a soft kiss to his temple. Wei Ying whispered, but only his sister heard, “...sorry,”

Jiang Yanli’s gaze softened and she turned to him, “A-Xian,”

Wei Ying looked at her, but then for a second, he just saw her dead body. At once, he felt faint and turned away from her quickly, refusing to look at her. Jiang Yanli blinked surprised and reach forward, gently taking the younger’s hand and rubbing soft circles on the back of his palm.

The scene changed to show Jin Guangyao smiling softly, “...and ZiXuan put me in charge of planning it,”

“That is kind of him,” Lan Xichen grinned, “Young Master Jin seems to have changed quite a bit ever since his confession to Maiden Jiang at Phoenix Mountain,”

“Pardon?” Jin ZiXuan choked, face turning a soft color of pink.

“What do you mean *pardon* ?” Jiang Cheng jumped.

“It seems you eventually get your head out of your ass,” Wei Ying smiled, only to get a withering glare from Yu ZiYuan, “WEI WUXIAN!!”

Wei Ying wilted, responding almost right away, “Sorry, I wasn’t really thinking, I just spoke,”

Jiang WanYin frowned deeply at the interaction.

‘From now on we are brothers,’

Jin GuangYao was sitting down on the edge of the bed, Lan Xichen next to him and Nie MingJue pacing around the room. Jin Guangyao shook his head, “Sao Zi is a complete mess...I do not understand what happened. I- I- mean, I am aware that Young Master Wei never liked ZiXuan, but ZiXuan gave him a chance to come to A-Ling’s banquet! To meet Sao Zi! It- why would he kill him!!?”

Jiang Wanyin gritted his teeth and seethed, “Disgusting, absolutely disgusting,”

Jin Ling shook his head in disbelief, “He knows...he knows that Daijiu did nothing and yet here he is...”

Lan Xichen looked at Nie MingJue helplessly, the oldest face dark, but his eyes flickered to Jin Guangyao and softened slightly with concern. Jin Guangyao shook his head and looked up with a few tears in his eyes, “Did you know...that one of the reasons ZiXuan invited Young Master Wei was not only because of Sao Zi, but because he wanted to love Sao Zi’s brother’s as she did. He wanted to make a proper family and be happy with them...but instead- instead Wei WuXian killed him!!!!”

Wei WuXian and Jiang Wanyin choked, the older's sounding more like a horrified gasp. Jiang Yanli's heart softened, "Oh, Young Master Jin, you are truly kind,"

Jin ZiXuan looked at her in shock, "I have not- I mean- that wasn't-"

She giggled softly at the forming blush and Jin ZiXuan turned away. His eyes fell to Wei WuXian, who was covering his mouth with one hand, eyes closed. A soft sob choked out and he covered his face with both hands, "What the fuck...what the fuck is wrong with me..."

"Wei Ying," Lan WangJi fretted, "Wei Ying, enough. You are not at fault,"

Wei WuXian just leaned into the touch, but did not lift his head.

'Whoever breaks this shall be punished by heaven's law!'

They watched as the scene showed Jin Guangyao walking alone. He entered a chamber and walked to the desk where Jin Guangshan was waiting. With a smile, he emptied out the contents, "All is done, Father,"

Jin Guangshan smiled wickedly, reaching for a few of the manuscripts. He chuckled, shuffling through them, "Wei WuXian, Wei WuXian, it really is too bad for him. But what can I expect from someone like him. He really was a most loyal servant,"

Wei Ying stiffened, Jiang Cheng scowled, Jiang Yanli's eyes hardened, Jiang Fengmian frowned, and Yu ZiYuan raised an eyebrow. Jiang WanYin flinched slightly, reaching over and gripping his brother's hand. He then said, "...Shixiong,"

Wei WuXian looked at him and smiled sadly, "A-Cheng, how many times have I told you to stop this," he then reached over and tapped a finger over his little brother's dantain, where the golden core sat, "The past is the past for us,"

The two of them glanced at the five cultivators in purple, who were staring at them with a billion silent questions. Jiang Wanyin answered a couple with one sentence, “For a motto that states to strive for the impossible, our family has never been able to strive towards basic communication,”

Jiang Yanli’s eyes went straight to her parents.

Jin Guangyao’s smile tightened a bit, “It is a shame he was too stubborn to give up the seal. It has cost Sao Zi and ZiXuan’s lives to end his tyranny,”

Wei WuXian seethed, “Tyranny??! I’m the tyrant?!!!!”

“Of course not,” Lan WangJi and Jiang Wanyin both snapped, equally pissed off.

“Unbelievable,” Lan SiZhui growled.

“I can’t believe I used to play with him,” Jin Ling hissed, “And he was responsible for the deaths of my father, my mother, my uncle, my grandfather, my cousin, and my aunt,”

Lan Zhan spoke up, “What does this have to do with my Brother’s promise, from before?”

“You will see,” Lan JingYi sighed.

‘Once was a negligible lonely guest in the old city,’ Jin Guangyao sang out alone again, the scene shifting to show Meng Yao climbing up the steps of Koi Tower, presenting a pearl token.

The scene speeds ahead to show Jin Guangshan walk out and scowl at the boy. He then kicks Meng Yao back, the young child gasping in shock as he tumbles down the hundred steps, landing at the bottom with a terrible thud.

There was blood, but Meng Yao swallowed and pushed himself to stand. He gazed at the top with a firm gaze and saluted, before walking away.

‘And spend my later life in Koi Tower,’

Jin Guangyao walked up the stairs in his golden robes, elegance in his strides. Reaching the top, the two guards salute, “Sect Leader Jin,”

Jin Guangyao gives a polite smile and bow of the head before continuing forward.

“He will not be Sect Leader as far I can help it,” Madam Jin scorned, “A-Rong, you should stay far away from him this time around!!”

Jin ZiXuan blinked and opened his mouth, “But...A-Yao just wants acceptance,”

The sentence and intimate name, made everyone snap their eyes to Jin ZiXuan in disbelief. Madam Jin looked scandalized, “A-RONG!!”

“Mother, I...I don’t think we know enough about A-Yao to judge him yet...” Jin ZiXuan spoke carefully.

“He kills you!! Is that not enough?!”

“But Yiling Patriarch told us before that it was because of Father that my life even ended up in danger,” Jin ZiXuan pointed out.

“No, no. There will be no bastards in my house!! Meng Yao is not my child, why should I care about his well being?! Let him make his own choices, I have to focus on you because your Father is of no use!!” Madam Jin scowled.

Wei Ying curled his fingers into fists, hidden in his sleeves. He schooled his expression, forcing it to remain unchanging, despite his heart quivering and words threatening to be leaked. No, he just had to stay silent and *not cause trouble*.

Jin ZiXuan didn't know where the sudden adrenaline rush came from, because his voice raised slightly, "Meng Yao may not be your son, but he is my half-brother!"

Madam Jin's jaw dropped open. Yu ZiYuan narrowed her eyes sharply at Jin ZiXuan, "Young Master Jin, your half-brother is nothing more than a threat to your own birthright and your future murderer. It would be smart for you to not associate yourself with such bastards,"

Jin ZiXuan could argue with his Mother, but arguing with Yu Ziyuan was entirely different. He held his tongue, but his displeasure showed. With an arrogant and annoyed expression, he turned away, facing the scene again.

'I know there's no peace and quiet in the cultivation world,'

Jin Guangyao was sitting at his desk, staring at the male in front of him with wide eyes, "What did you say?"

The man in front of him wore white robes, at first glance, he seemed like he was of the Lan Sect, but there were small differences in the uniform, along with no forehead ribbon. Su She repeated, "It was Hanguang Jun. And he was travelling with someone else, a demonic cultivator. They took the torso,"

"A demonic cultivator travelling with Hanguang Jun..." Jin Guangyao repeated slowly, "The only demonic cultivator Hanguang Jun would and ever has associated with is Wei WuXian,"

"I saw the boy's face, it was not Wei WuXian," Su She sneered, "Plus, as arrogant as Hanguang Jun is-"

“WHAT?!” Wei Ying and Wei WuXian and the four juniors all screamed.

“Lan Zhan?! Arrogant?!” Wei Ying laughed in disbelief, “Yeah, and my parents are alive!!”

“Lan Zhan- do not stop me from rising Su She’s corpse so I may murder him again,” Wei WuXian narrowed his eyes.

“If anyone is arrogant it’s Su She!” Ouyang Zizhen seethed.

“Enough,” Lan Wangji told them all with a small chuckle, “Su She is gone, killed by Chifeng Zun,”

“Ah?” Nie Mingjue was confused, “Wasn’t I dead?”

There was a pregnant pause, before Jiang Wanyin facepalmed, “How did we forget to explain *that* of all things?”

‘Who would be with me in this journey?’

Jin Guangyao was staring at a woman they all recognized as Madam Qin. She was in tears and Jin Guangyao’s face looked horrified, “I...Madam Qin...”

“I’m sorry, A-Yao, I should have told you sooner! I didn’t expect you and A-Su to fall in love this deeply, I should’ve done something!” She sobbed, “But please, please, you cannot marry her!”

Jin Guangyao shook his head and whispered, “A-Su is pregnant...we eloped a month ago...”

Madam Qin seemed to have froze, before her wails grew louder. Jin Guangyao looked defeated, before shaking his head, “Madam Qin, I cannot call off our marriage, not without explaining to A-Su everything, and that would mean you would have to tell your husband...” he then looked at her, “But if you have not told him for this long, then I do not doubt you are against this. I will marry A-Su...I will not leave her to raise a son alone, even if...even if....”

Wei WuXian’s eyes widened, “Oh my god, she was pregnant with Rusong before he found out...”

“He still didn’t tell her,” Jiang Wanyin shook his head, “He should have told her, no matter what. She could’ve gotten rid of the baby still,”

“Why would she do that? And what is going on?” Jiang Yanli asked.

Grandmaster Lan took a deep breath and looked at Madam Jin and Jin ZiXuan, “Jin Guangshan raped Madam Qin. The current Maiden Qin Su in your time is actually Young Master Jin’s half-sister,”

Jin ZiXuan’s face turned pale and Madam Jin froze. Everyone else of the past gasped in horror. Wei Ying got out, “He fell in love with his half-sister, he had a kid with his half-sister, oh my god...”

“But...but the Qin Sect has been a loyal subordinate to the Lanling Jin Sect for years!” Lan Qiren looked slightly green.

Jin ZiXuan whispered, “I think I’m gonna be sick,”

Wen Ning quickly rose to his feet and held out a few pills which Jin ZiXuan took with shaky hands and popped them into his mouth. Nie Huaisang looked over at his seatmate and slowly reached forward, patting Jin ZiXuan’s back in comfort, the older boy just shaking his head in disbelief.

‘Drinking and enjoying the same moonlight,’ Lan Xichen’s voice dragged them back to the focus, the scene showing Lan Xichen, Nie MingJue, and Jin Guangyao all sitting down in one of the pavilion in Cloud Recesses, laughing and talking with one another, the moon light glittering above them.

“You are sure that it is not wine, right?” Nie MingJue smirked at Lan Xichen.

“I am positive,” Lan Xichen chuckled.

“Ah, that is good. I do not think Master Lan would be able to handle his oldest nephew drunk,” Jin Guangyao laughed.

Lan Xichen smiled with glee, but then a flash of gold and brown took over the screen, and suddenly, Lan Xichen was sitting alone, drinking tea without company, the smile on his face vanished, *‘But suddenly awake and you are all gone,’*

“I do not understand,” Lan Xichen frowned, **“Why am I in seclusion? Because of betrayal?”**

His answer was a few complicated expressions.

‘Though our friendship was solid and crystal,’

The scene showed Lan Xichen hugging Jin Guangyao comfortingly, the two stepping back. The younger was shaking, a pitiful expression, “A-and then he just went mad! I do not- I do not understand!”

Lan Xichen nodded and placed a hand on his friend’s shoulder, “Da-Ge’s temper had been worsening...but I did not expect Qi deviation to take him away so soon...Huaisang is in a much worse state...I feel terrible for you both to having witness such a sight,”

Jin Guangyao only nodded, “You should go and check on Huaisang, he will be expected to take over the sect now...I will see you at Da-Ge’s funeral, Er-Ge,”

“A-Yao,” Lan Xichen spoke softly, “Though I worry to burden you, I have such a favor to ask,”

“Er-Ge may always ask me anything,”

“I have known Da-Ge since I was a child...and with my...fractured relationship with Wangji, I fear I may be in a deep low for some time. Forgive me for such emotions in the future,” Lan Xichen smiled tiredly.

Lan Zhan and Lan Xichen frowned at the word of their relationship.

“Er-Ge, I cannot fault you for such things,” Jin Guangyao smiled, “Hanguang Jun has been gravely wounded by Wei WuXian, and as his older brother, it is understandable for you to worry of such an unfortunate feeling for Hanguang Jun to harbor towards the man responsible for the punishment. The fracture in your relationship is neither of your fault, but the fault of a dead man. And as Hanguang Jun has only just returned from his seclusion, only for Da-Ge to die so suddenly, your emotions are valid,”

Wei WuXian flinched violently, but Lan Wangji did not hesitate in bringing him closer and whisper softly, “Wrong, they are not Wei Ying’s fault. The love I feel for Wei Ying is not unfortunate, but a blessing. What happened between Brother and I had never been Wei Ying’s fault,”

Wei WuXian closed his eyes with a soft smile, “I love you,”

Lan Wangji smiled and placed a soft kiss on the younger’s cheek.

“Thank you A-Yao,” Lan Xichen smiled, “I knew I could tell you this,”

Jin Guangyao just smiled and bowed slightly.

The scene shifted rapidly to show the Twin Jade's, along with the reincarnated Wei WuXian standing together in what seemed to be a library. Wei WuXian was holding a book, the words *Collection of Turmoil* written on the front. Wei WuXian looked at Lan Xichen, "Zewu Jun...Jin Guangyao was a spy during the Sunshot Campaign and found many hidden passageways and secret information, finding the forbidden sector in Cloud Recesses is like child's play, especially as he had complete rein over Cloud Recesses..."

Lan Xichen's expression tightened, "No, it doesn't make sense. I heard him play Sound of Clarity, I taught him. He played correctly,"

"In front of you, yes," Wei WuXian nodded, "But when it was just him and Chifeng Zun, he played the piece from the Collection of Turmoil, actively causing Chifeng Zun to get more temperamental than calmer. It was a slow poison,"

Lan Wangji looked at his brother, "Chifeng Zun was tone deaf, he would not have been able to differentiate, especially if they sounded so similar, as it did when Wei Ying played the piece for us,"

Lan Xichen looked solemn and then muttered, taking the book, "I will find a way to test the score..."

"Testing on living people would go against the Lan Sect rules, Zewu Jun," Wei WuXian was confused.

"I will test it on myself,"

Lan Wangji raised his voice slightly, "Brother!"

“WangJi, the version of Jin GuangYao I know and the version that you and the world knows is very different! Throughout the years, in my eyes he has always been enduring his suffer, caring for people, treating everyone with respect. I have always believed, without a doubt, that the criticism he received from others were all from misunderstandings, that I know how he truly is,” Lan Xichen spoke softly, as if holding something back, **“Now, you want me to believe, at once, that everything about this person is fake, that he planned to kill one of his sworn brothers, that I was also part of his plan and even helped him...”**

‘But the lies I heard made me lost in the trap,’

The blood seemed to have drained from Lan Xichen’s face as understanding crawled into his heart. Lan Zhan seemed to have felt the change, despite being astonished himself with the sudden explanation of his brother’s future, and glanced up, “Brother?”

Lan Xichen heard the silent *‘are you alright?’*. He did not answer, heart hammering too loud in his chest. Grandmaster Lan and Lan WangJi watched him with worried faces.

The scene fell away to show Nie MingJue looking down at Baxia with a complicated expression, while Lan Xichen stood in front of him with a solemn one.

Nie MingJue’s voice sung, ***‘Trouble by this sword of chaos,’***

“MingJue,” Lan Xichen used the man’s name, causing the brown eyes to lift towards him, **“Maybe...maybe Huaisang’s wish is not completely wrong,”**

“What?!” Nie Huaisang snapped, whipping his head towards his brother, who seemed to have gone stiff.

“Ah...Huaisang doesn’t know at this age,” Jiang Wanyin thought aloud.

“You know?” Nie MingJue exclaimed in shock.

“We all know,” Ouyang Zizhen answered.

“Senior Wei actually worked with Sect Leader Nie for two years until he found a way to get rid of the curse,” Lan JingYi boasted.

“Curse?” Multiple voices repeated.

Nie MingJue looked at Wei WuXian, “You did what?”

Wei WuXian sighed, “It was not an easy task, I was knocked out for a good three days after the whole aftermath of dealing with that damned sword spirit and it took another year to fully work through all of the Nie Sect disciples and blades to cleanse them,”

“...you mean, we still use blades but we won’t fall into Qi deviation?” Nie MingJue narrowed his eyes.

“Yes,” Lan WangJi nodded, “Huaisang was insistent on the topic as he did not want to have his children suffer to such a faith and Wei Ying is a specialist in areas with resentment,”

“Da-Ge, what are they talking about?” Nie Huaisang asked sharply.

Nie MingJue stared at his brother and then sighed, “Later...”

Nie MingJue scowled, “I have no choice,”

“You don’t even have an heir except for Huaisang...and Huaisang will despise running the sect,” Lan Xichen reasoned.

“I will hold out as long as I am able to. I will train the senior disciples and elders, try and involve Huaisang more in sect duties,” Nie MingJue’s face was dark, “He will not have a choice,”

Lan Xichen looked defeated and then said softly, “I will play Sound of Clarity for you as often as possible,”

‘Can’t be accomplished either way, why not break the world with blade?’

The scene showed Nie MingJue standing, blood spilling from his features as he madly swung Baxia around. Jin Guangyao stood in front of him, avoiding the swings until he was kicked backwards towards the stairs once more.

Wen Qing’s eyes widened, “Heavens, that is a terrible qi deviation,”

Nie Huaisang whimpered and Jin ZiXuan glanced at him, before reaching up and patting the younger’s shoulder.

The scene shifted to show Jin Guangyao standing in front of Su She again.

‘Peony never blossom by itself,’

“You did it?” Jin Guangyao asked softly.

Su She nodded, rubbing his chest, “Jin ZiXun is cursed and I’ve got the backlash,”

Wei WuXian let out a snarl. Lan SiZhui looked enraged, “Su She is practically responsible for A-Die’s downfall!”

“He is responsible!” Jin Ling stated, “He cursed Jin ZiXun, but Jin ZiXun believed it was DaiJiu. Then on my one month celebration, Jin ZiXun took advantage of my Father’s invite to ambush DaiJiu!”

“It was a planned attack as well,” Lan WangJi spat, “All the corpses in the area had been dug out so Wei Ying had nothing to use, resulting in him being forced to use Wen Ning to protect himself,”

“Which gave Su She the opportunity to use the flute to kill Jin ZiXun and later Jin ZiXuan,” Grandmaster Lan closed his eyes tiredly.

Lan Zhan’s eyebrow twitched, “He won’t be staying in the Lan Sect after this,”

“Aw, worried for your future husband, WangJi-Xiong?” Nie Huaisang stole the chance.

Lan Zhan sent a murderous glare while Wei Ying’s cheeks turned pink. Wei WuXian chuckled softly, Lan WangJi smiling amused.

‘Once enters the world it will be stained by dirt,’

The scene showed the inside of a temple. There were multiple people in the temple. Lan Xichen, Jiang Cheng, Wei WuXian, Lan WangJi, and Jin Ling were all standing. Nie Huaisang was behind them, unconscious. In front of them, Jin Guangyao knelt with a pitiful expression. Lan Xichen had his sword out and his voice spoke with exhaustion, “What about Jin ZiXuan?”

Jin Ling’s eyes widened and the Yunmeng brother’s froze. Lan WangJi glances at Wei WuXian to see the younger staring at Jin Guangyao who looks down, ashamed.

“What have you done...” Wei WuXian’s voice whispers and he throws down the sword he was holding charging forward.

Grabbing Jin GuangYao by the collar, he heaves him up rage and horror clear, “What have you done!? TALK!!!!!”

Wei Ying let out a small snort, earning a couple glances. Jiang Cheng asked, “What is funny about this?”

“Nothing. Im just finding it really fucking amusing that everyone jumped on to blame me without a proper investigation of the event, when we know that Su She was there and Wen Ning could have testified that he heard two flutes. And if no one believed us, Empathy could have been performed,” Wei Ying deadpanned, “Not to mention it was obviously a planned event if the corpses were dug up to hinder my power,”

Wen Ning nodded and agreed, “I-it really isn’t e-even fair,”

Those of the future snorted, with the acception of Grandmaster Lan and Lan WangJi letting out amused breaths of air.

‘With all my hatred,’

They were back to the Venetriad Triad, Nie MingJue sitting in the center on his seat in the Qinghe main hall, while the younger two both had Guqin’s in front of them and were playing. The sound stopped and Jin Guangyao said, “Now that I have heard Er-Ge’s playing, I want to throw my zither out the window,”

Lan Xichen laughed, “You’re talented, you will master the Song of Clarity very soon,”

Jin Guangyao nodded and the scene shifted away once more to show Jin Guangyao in the forbidden section of the GusuLan library. His face was blank and he was carefully ripping out a piece of paper from a book.

‘Only two words out of ten are true,’

“I knew it!” Wei WuXian exclaimed, “Jin Guangyao has photographic memory, but removing the page removes any evidence of proving the song he plays is from the Collection of Turmoil!”

Lan Xichen seemed to wilt slightly, the part he played in the scheme beginning to be seen clearly.

‘Buried in this small tomb is someone I failed too easily,’

The scene shifted once again to show the Guanyin Temple, this time, Jin Guangyao was lowering a body in a casket, with a guilty face, “Mother, I have failed to get Father’s approval, he would never give it. My hands are stained with blood, I have committed terrible acts believing he would,”

There was a pause and Jin Guangyao softly closed the casket, walking away and glancing up at the statue that seemed to resemble him. Jin Guangyao saluted, “Mother, I wish you a much better life,”

Once more, they were shown the Venetriad Triad walking together, their voices singing with one another’s, ***‘ With me to spend the rest years of my life,’***

The scene showed a group of cultivators, including Lan Xichen, Jin Guangyao, and Nie Huaisang, surrounding a headless corpse. Nie Huaisang was crying, hugging the corpse tightly, while Jin Guangyao seemed to pale rapidly. Lan Xichen’s expression was complex, but his eyes were fixed on Jin Guangyao.

“I don’t understand!” Nie Huaisang cried, “Who would do this?!”

“It must be Wei WuXian! He’s even cursed the esteemed Hanguang Jun!” A cultivator exclaimed.

‘With me to share each other’s weal and woe,’

Lan Xichen found himself defending the two without hesitation, “Young Master Wei had barely talked to Da-Ge even when either of them were alive. This is not his doing,”

Jin Guangyao declared, “Whoever did such an act, I will catch them and force them to face heaven’s punishment!” he then turned to the group of cultivators, “However, the situation with Young Master Wei being alive is most alarming,”

‘From now on we are brothers,’

“Sect Leader Jiang, you have the most history with Wei WuXian, where would he go and what would be the best way to permanently get rid of him?” A voice turned to the male in purple, who was standing silently, eyes trained on the back of Jin Ling’s robes, the teen being guided away by a few kind servants.

Hearing the words, his face darkens and he turns to stare at Lan Xichen, knowing well that male must have already known who Mo XuanYu truly was. Turning away he spoke, “Why chase after him? If we leave him alone, its less trouble for us,”

Wei WuXian blinked, “Hah?”

Jiang Wanyin gave a dead answer, “You’re welcome,”

“It didn’t work though,” Lan WangJi pointed out.

‘Whoever breaks this vow will be punished by heaven’s law,’

The scene faded away before they could hear the rest of the conversation and showed Jin Guangshan sitting lazily on his throne and Jin Guangyao standing before him. Jin Guangshan shook his head, “Nie MingJue is becoming a political inconvenience, get rid of him,”

Jin Guangyao’s eyes seemed to widen and he did not answer, “...Father?”

“Did you hear me?” Jin Guangshan gave him a sharp look, “A-Yao, don’t tell me you’re more loyal to another sect than your own?”

Jin Guangyao’s expression changed and he shook his head, bowing, “Chifeng Zun will be disposed of for you Father,”

“...Jin Guangyao killed Chifeng Zun,” Jiang Fengmian muttered.

Wen Qing held her head, “Because he wants Jin Guangshan to accept him,”

“There’s no limits he won’t go for acceptance...” Jiang Yanli frowned softly, “But it is obviously pointless,”

Wei Ying had to resist a flinch.

The music faded a bit, to a few soft strums. The view changed as well to show Lan Xichen standing in front of Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi (who were sitting on the bed), the former only in a pair of trousers and a white inner shirt-

“Those are Lan inner robes,” Lan Qiren suddenly stated.

Lan Zhan and Wei Ying seemed to have frozen, while their older counterparts quickly shut down the train of thought. Lan WangJi explained, “Wei Ying was injured. I only let him borrow my inner robes,”

Wei WuXian suddenly asked, “Where is Chifeng Zun’s body?”

“It is being kept with Huaisang at the moment. I’ve sent people I trust to look over it. The other sects have already seen the body,”

“Jin Guangyao’s reaction?”

“Flawless,” Lan WangJi answered this time.

Lan Xichen spoke slowly, “He said he would definitely get to the bottom of this and give everyone an explanation. Now that Young Master Wei is awake, then, WangJi, is it not time for you to give me an explanation as well?”

Lan WangJi stood up, “Brother,”

Lan Xichen sighed, “WangJi, what do you want me to say to you?”

The Twin Jade’s frowned at their interaction. There was a line, very thin, but something had changed between them.

Lan WangJi spoke, “Brother, Chifeng Zun’s head is indeed in Jin Guangyao’s hands,”

“...what?” Nie MingJue spat.

“Your body was dismembered after you died and the parts were hidden far from one another,” Jiang Wanyin explained, “Your left hand showed up at Mo Manor, where Shixiong got reincarnated and met the Lan juniors and Lan WangJi. ShiXiong and WangJi investigated the matter and found your corpse and along the way, all the secrets of 13 years prior had come to light,”

“...what?” Nie MingJue repeated again.

“You saw with your own eyes?” Lan Xichen’s voice made them turn back.

“He saw with his own eyes,” Lan WangJi referred to Wei WuXian, who was unusually silent and just watching the interaction.

“And you believe him?”

“I do,”

Wei Ying felt a small smile curl upward, warmth spreading through his body. Jiang Yanli noticed and giggled softly, nudging Jiang Cheng, who glanced over and smirked amused.

Lan Xichen asked, “What about Jin Guangyao?”

“Not to be believed,” Lan WangJi responded.

Lan Xichen chuckled, “WangJi, then, how do you judge whether someone should be believed or not?”

He looked at Wei WuXian, “You trust Young Master Wei, while I trust Jin Guangyao,”

Lan WangJi’s face seemed to turn cold slightly and Wei WuXian patted his husband’s knee reassuringly, “A-Zhan,”

“I know,” Lan WangJi muttered.

The scene shifted to show Jin Guangyao sitting in front of a guqin. Nie MingJue sat not too far from him, eyes closed and listening to the notes of the Song of Clarity. Jin Guangyao smirked suddenly and slowly, the notes transitioned.

“It’s wrong,” Multiple Lan voices spoke up.

Lan JingYi looked towards Nie MingJue, “Wait- will Chifeng Zun feel the effects?”

“No,” Grandmaster Lan assured, “We aren’t able to feel the spiritual power involved in the notes, we’re fine,”

Another switch and the scene showed Nie MingJue bloody body fall to the ground, staring towards two figures. Nie Huaisang who looked terrified, clutching his upper arm, which was bleeding profusely and Jin Guangyao, who was bleeding slightly from his head after being kicked down the stairs by Nie MingJue.

A heart wrenching shriek tore from Nie Huaisang’s mouth, “DA-GE!!!!”

Nie MingJue flinched slightly at the agony, only to grunt when a body rushed towards him and arms wrapped around his figure. Not bothering to say anything, Nie MingJue hugged his little brother tightly, “Its okay, A-Sang. I’m here,”

‘Once called three Zuns,’

Lan Xichen’s voice tore open once again, the scene showing him staring at Jin Guangyao with disbelief, eyes wide with hurt. His eyes then changed to remorse and defeat, “Am I right to trust you?”

Jin Guangyao thought for a moment and then smiled slightly, “Sorry, I can’t help it. Have done all the evil things, but still want someone’s sympathy...This is who I am,”

Lan Xichen's expression turned pained, his eyes turning away and closing.

Lan Wangji cursed, "Bastard,"

Lan Qiren gasped while Wei Ying jolted and then turned to face Lan Zhan with a bright smile, "Lan Zhan!! So you can curse!! Teach me how to curse in Gusu dialect!"

Lan Zhan looked at him and he retorted, "Ridiculous!"

"Aw! Come on Er-Gege! Please, please! I know now that you don't actually hate me!!" Wei Ying pressed and Lan Zhan glared at him at the nickname, but it faltered slightly at the dazzling smile.

Lan Sizhui watched the interaction with curiosity, "You both are already in love with one another and know it, why are you avoiding the topic?"

At once, the two faces flushed and Wei Ying practically slammed back into his seat, the gold and silver straying far from one another. Lan Sizhui gave a small giggle.

'In Zhongyuan Festival come back two ghosts,'

They were back in the Guanyin Temple, this time two other people were with them. Nie Huaisang was also awake and hiding behind Lan Xichen as they watched Nie Mingjue, who was a fierce corpse, fighting Wen Ning, who...was also a fierce a corpse. The Twin Jade's were trying to subdue Nie Mingjue, while the Yunmeng brother's were crouched beside Jin Ling, worry on their features.

'Flowers bloom on different branches,'

The scene progressed to show Jiang Cheng pull out something from his sleeve as he stood behind Wei WuXian, who was whistling a tune and trying to control Nie MingJue and lead him to a coffin.

“Wei WuXian!” Jiang Cheng yelled and Wei WuXian glanced back as something was thrown at him.

Out of reflex he caught it and his eyes widened slightly at the sight of Chenqing. He smiled at Jiang Cheng and turned around, eyes turning red and the flute under his lips. At once, heavenly flute notes took over the chaos and Nie MingJue’s figure shook, responding to the notes. The Twin Jade’s paused their own music, all eyes on the demonic cultivator.

‘Palm prints have different venations,’

Another progression, this time the chaos had ended and they were all resting. Most of the group was beside one another, sitting in a circle. Behind them, Lan Xichen sat between Jin Guangyao, who was gravely injured and Nie Huaisang who was panting and shaken. Lan Xichen spoke, “Huaisang, can you give me the medicine?”

Nie Huaisang let out a small stutter and reached for the bottle. A flicker of hesitation appeared and he glanced at Lan Xichen and Jin Guangyao, before pocketing the vile. He then said, “Ah, where is it?”

Lan Xichen turned around to help and Nie Huaisang waited before yelling, “Er-Ge, look out!!!”

Responding, Lan Xichen turned around and Shuoyue went straight into Jin Guangyao’s chest, the male gasping in shock. The event caused the others to turn around, startled by the sudden turn of events.

“...he didn’t do anything,” Wen Qing pointed out.

“The entire scheme of Jin Guangyao’s down fall and Wei Ying’s resurrection was orchestrated by Huaisang,” Lan WangJi explained, “As revenge for killing Chifeng Zun. Huaisang found the evidence of the tampered song of clarity after visiting the Nie Sect Saber Hall with his brother. He played a piccolo, instructed by Jin Guangyao if Chifeng Zun were to require calming. It was needed, but later, I presume, right after the funeral progression, Huaisang found the music scores and found the poison pattern in the notes...”

All eyes turned to Nie Huaisang. Wei Ying then laughed, “I knew you were intelligent!!”

‘ Wake up from a long dream while feel at loss,’

The scene showed the Guanyin Temple collapsing and the group running out. Jin Guangyao was holding Shuoyue, the blade much deeper than earlier. Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian were behind Lan Xichen, watching the scene with eyes wide. Lan Xichen looked devastated and ordered, “Do not move!!”

“Brother, we have to go!” Lan WangJi called out.

Jin Guangyao seemed to suddenly have a change and shoved Lan Xichen back with a strong push, Shuoyue leaving his chest and the force sending him tumbling into the coffin where Nie MingJue’s fierce corpse rested and demanded to be let out. Lan Xichen stumbled back with a face full of terror, looking at the scene. Without waiting, Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi grabbed Lan Xichen, forcing him out of the temple just as the entire thing collapsed.

‘Who comes back and who is gone are both my old pals,’

Another progression, Lan Xichen sitting at the steps looking dazed. He looked at Nie Huaisang, “Huaisang...did he...did he really try to attack me?”

Nie Huaisang stared at Lan Xichen and his face turned into nervous and fearsome, “Er-Ge...asking me like this, now even I am not sure anymore!”

Lan Xichen's expression turned worse and a haunting spark took place in his eyes, turning away slowly.

The promise Lan Xichen had made earlier began to slide into place.

***'Vowed to spend the rest years of my life together,'* The three sworn brother's sang once more**

Lan Xichen was in a room, possibly his own. His hair was left open and his aura of serenity seemed to have been shattered. Behind him stood Lan WangJi, the younger's face twisted with obvious pain, "Brother..."

"No, WangJi. I cannot," Lan Xichen shook his head, voice shaking, "I cannot..."

"Brother, I understand your choice, but I do not understand your guilt," Lan WangJi frowned.

"I trusted a killer, a killer that caused the suffering of so many. And I helped him kill my best friend, I helped him kill your beloved!" Lan Xichen turned to his younger brother, pain clear on his face.

At the mention of Wei WuXian, Lan WangJi's expression shifted. He seemed to give in and then asked dryly, "How many months?"

Lan Xichen paused, "No set time..."

Lan WangJi's figure seemed to waver, "What?"

'Now life and death take us apart,'

Lan Xichen inhaled softly, “My judgement is ill and my own naived view caused the lives and joy of many. Repent is needed for as long as I feel it should,”

“...what about the sect?” Lan WangJi asked slowly.

Lan Xichen swallowed, “...The elders can manage-”

“No,” Lan WangJi stopped him and then shook his head, “Nevermind, I will manage it,”

“WangJi-”

“Brother,”

There was a small pause, “WangJi...”

Lan WangJi glanced up.

‘Empty this cup of wine’

Lan Xichen whispered, “I’m sorry,”

Lan WangJi looked at his brother for a few seconds and then shook his head, “No need,”

He then left the Hanshi and Lan Xichen seemed to slump onto the ground, covering his face with his hands and shoulders shaking softly as he began to sob softly.

Lan Zhan felt his eyes widen and he looked at his brother before reaching over and gripping the male's hand. Lan Xichen blinked at the sudden touch, but smiled, squeezing back.

'To toast the universe and take care of myself,'

The scenery changed to show Cloud Recesses. The scene focused on the outside of a room, Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian walking up a path that seemed to lead to the house. The only difference was that Wei Wuxian was in the black and red robes.

"The Hanshi," Lan Zhan recognized and then informed to everyone else, "Brother's quarters,"

"Oh, I assumed they were sect leader quarters," Lan Sizhui blinked.

"It is," Lan Wangji informed the two juniors, "It is just Father built himself a house when he built Mother's to seclude himself in, so as heir, Brother was given the Hanshi,"

The three Lan's from the past didn't know how to feel about hearing Lan Wangji casually mention Madam Lan and Qingheng Jun, especially after the previous conversation.

"Are you sure?" Lan Wangji's voice asked, the two of them pausing as they got a full view of the Hanshi.

Wei Wuxian turned to him, smiling softly, "He's been in there for two years...I think that's long enough. He wasn't even at fault,"

Lan Wangji gave a small eyebrow raise and Wei Wuxian crossed his arms over his chest. His expression softened and his voice lowered, "A-Zhan, you can't be seriously holding a grudge against Zewu Jun,"

Lan Zhan felt like he had been slapped and he repeated, "*A-Zhan ?*"

Wei WuXian blinked and glanced at Lan WangJi for an answer. Lan WangJi smiled sadly, “Mother was the only person who called me that. Brother did for when I was just born, but he stopped after a while,”

Wei WuXian understood, knowing the memories of Madam Lan were still extremely sensitive to the past Lan Zhan. Lan Xichen, on the other hand, was frowning. His brother had a grudge against him?

Lan WangJi’s expression changed at the name, everyone could tell the man seemed to soften his features and stiffness. Lan WangJi turned and gave a barely noticeable shake of the head, “I don’t know,”

“Yeah, well let me guess,” Wei WuXian began, “It’s not the scars on your back. You told me Zewu Jun is probably the only reason you survived, since he had taken you straight to the Jingshi and gave you spiritual energy and cleaned and bandaged your wounds, correct?”

Lan WangJi nodded, “Brother was disappointed at the time, but he also was the only one who understood how much I cared,”

The Twin Jades did not know how to feel about that.

Wei WuXian flinched, face turning guilty, before he shook it away, “Its not the siege,”

“Mn,”

Wei WuXian thought for a moment and then understood, glancing up, “Is it...Jin Guangyao?”

Lan WangJi’s gaze turned murderous.

Wei WuXian smiled painfully.

The gaze was understandable.

“Because of Jin Guangyao’s crimes, Zewu Jun felt betrayal and lost confidence in his judgement,” Jiang Yanli said gently, glancing at the Lan heir, “Young Master Lan, you are truly not at fault. Your actions were driven by kindness, that is not a crime,”

Lan Xichen smiled slightly and gave a small nod.

“Talk to me,” Wei WuXian pleaded, “If I’m going to bust Zewu Jun out of seclusion, then I kind of need to know what his baby brother thinks...especially since said baby brother is to marry me in eight months,”

Three Lan’s froze, *‘Seclusion?’*

Suddenly, the earlier conversation seemed to make sense and a feeling of dread began to pool in Lan Qiren, eyes flickering to his nephew’s who seemed to tighten the grip they were sharing.

Lan WangJi smiled a bit at the mention of marriage, but then it faded, “It is petty and childish. I should not hold grudges, Brother was tricked like all of us,”

“Except Huaisang and you and Chifeng Zun,” Wei WuXian muttered, but seeing that did not help, he looked at Lan WangJi sternly, “I don’t think its childish,”

Lan WangJi looked down, “It is . I should not feel such a way. Brother is brother. He has been hurt. I should not hold grudges when he has already gone through enough,”

“Oh, WangJi,” Lan Xichen exhaled softly.

“Hey, SiZhui,” Nie Huaisang looked at the boy, “You were a Wen before, one of the remnants that lived with Wei-xiong in the Burial Mounds and now you know that...don’t you have any grudges?”

Lan SiZhui smiled, “I do not remember much, even then when I realized I was a Wen, it was only do to snippets of things I have and things A-Die or Uncle Ning have or said,”

“Isn’t that all the more reason to hold a grudge?” Jiang Cheng looked curious, “They killed your family and caused you to forget everything,”

Lan SiZhui shrugged helplessly, “Its hard to feel something when you have no recollection. That’s what A-Die told me when I was having the same confusion. I wanted to be angry, but I could not find it in me to be angry. I wanted to hate the Lan Sect, but the Lan Sect has raised me and become my home,”

Wei Ying understood perfectly and nodded. The four jiangs all glanced at Wei Ying, clearly thinking of two dead cultivators.

Wei WuXian’s features hardened, “A-Zhan, look at me,”

Lan WangJi raised his head, silver meeting gold, “You’re his brother, his baby brother. You get all right to feel the way you want. I mean...don’t you think I felt frustrated when everyone believed rumors over the actual facts? That I come back only to find out my name is much more dirty than it was when I died? Of course I have grudges, but my grudges are with blood, not things that can be fixed. I have to let go of my anger and my grudges because I can’t do anything about them. If you’re upset, you can still talk to Zewu Jun. He literally yelled at me when I was certain you didn’t love me and he told me about Nightless City,”

“Senior Wei, your advice and pep talks are always the best things,” Lan JingYi praised.

“Thank you,” both Wei’s chorused.

Lan WangJi blinked and then confessed, “He didn’t trust me,”

Lan Xichen winced slightly, recalling the words, *‘You trust Young Master Wei, while I trust Jin Guangyao,’*

Wei WuXian also seemed a bit startled, but then understood, “ah...” he then giggled, “So you don’t just get jealous when other people are with me, you get jealous when other people try to claim your gege as their own! Hahaha! Lan Zhan, you’re the cutest!”

All three Lan WangJi’s felt their ears burn. Lan Zhan’s face turned cold, “Not jealous,”

“A-Ying!” Lan WangJi complained, using the intimate name and Wei WuXian sputtered to a stop, face turning red, before he covered it, “ *Fuck* . I’m still not used to *you* calling me that, despite other people using it as well!”

Wei Ying on the other hand seemed to have frozen in place, “A...Ying?” he blinked, feeling his head buzz. No memories resurfaced, but he understood enough. His parents must’ve called him the same thing.

Lan WangJi just ignored him and motioned towards the Hanshi, “You should go to see Brother now, or else it will be late,”

Wei WuXian rolled his eyes, with a smile, “You just wanna pin me to the bed!!”

Lan WangJi did not deny nor confirm the statement. Instead, he just pecked Wei WuXian’s forehead and turned to walk back towards the main part of Cloud Recesses. Wei WuXian giggled, walking towards the Hanshi, “fuddy-duddy,”

“SHIXIONG!!!” Jiang Wanyin roared.

“WHAT?!” Wei WuXian defended, “I didn’t know we would be showing our past selves things from the future and that included my sex life?!”

“Oh my god,” Wei Ying was bright red, hands covering his face again and Lan WangJi’s blush had begun to leak into his neck rather than just his ears.

Nie Huaisang burst into laughter, “You’re a bottom!”

Wei Ying shrieked, “SHUT UP!!!!”

“I’m a power bottom,” Wei WuXian defended, earning another shriek from Wei Ying, who was probably on the edge of fainting due to high blood pressure.

“Moving on!!” Lan Qiren snapped at them, reminding everyone that he was still here.

Wei WuXian knocked on the Hanshi’s door twice. A faint reply came from inside and Wei WuXian slid open the door, stepping inside. He closed it again, turning to see an older and tired looking Lan Xichen sitting at a table and making tea. He glanced up, eyes widening in surprise, “Young Master Wei,”

“Sect Leader Lan,” Wei WuXian saluted with a warm smile.

“I didn’t know it was you. I thought it was WangJi,” Lan Xichen admitted.

“Lan Zhan was going to join me...but he has chief cultivator and sect leader things to do,” Wei WuXian informed, walking towards him, “May I?”

“Go ahead,” Lan Xichen smiled, but it had a touch of pain to it.

Lan Xichen’s mind churned at the sight. He did not like this image. Nie MingJue frowned deeply at the sight of his friend in such a state. The sight had put all the younger ones at silence as well, all of them only seeing Lan Xichen as the warm and calm first jade of Lan during the lectures. Despite seeing the earlier math, it was obvious this was a couple years after the events at the Guanyin temple, yet it seemed that Lan Xichen’s condition had not improved at all.

Wei WuXian sat down, bowing his head as Lan Xichen pulled out a cup for him. There was a small pause as Lan Xichen poured the tea, before the older asked, “Young Master Wei, excuse my rudeness, but why are you here?”

Wei WuXian smiled, “I’m here to see my unofficial brother in law, first of all,”

Lan Xichen smiled a bit at that, eyes twinkling in understanding, “A-Ying,”

Wei WuXian laughed, “Big Brother caught on right away!”

Lan WangJi smiled a bit, seeing his lover and older brother speak. Yu ZiYuan spoke up, “The music ended a while back, but the scene isn’t over,”

It was only then did they realize she was right.

The scene progressed forward a bit, the two still sitting and drinking. Wei WuXian finally sighed, “I didn’t just come to talk about how things have been,”

Lan Xichen nodded, “I figured,”

Wei WuXian thought for a moment, he then started, “When Shijie died, taking that sword for me, I had never wanted to destroy the entire world more,”

Lan Xichen understood, “Siblings are...important,”

Wei WuXian glanced at him, “They’re not my real siblings. We don’t share a single drop of blood, let alone look similar. But they were my siblings...Jiang Cheng is my brother, martial or not, I don’t care. He’s my brother,”

Jiang Wanyin and Jiang Cheng smiled.

Wei WuXian and Wei Ying also agreed with the words, giving their brothers a warm glance.

Lan Xichen looked at Wei WuXian, trying to figure out where this was going. Wei WuXian noticed and kept it going, “But, they’re not my only pair of siblings, despite growing up with them and learning with them. Qing-Jie and A-Ning are my siblings too. Despite not knowing them longer, I love them both like I love Shijie and Jiang Cheng,”

The Wen siblings blinked, surprised at the sudden mention.

Jiang Fengmian frowned, “Where is this conversation leading to?”

“A-Ying,” Lan Xichen said slowly.

“Lan Zhan is your brother,” Wei WuXian ignored him, “He always will be...but that doesn’t mean Chifeng Zun and Lianfeng Zun were any less,”

Lan Xichen froze and then spoke with difficulty, “A-Ying, I don’t think we should be having a conversation about the two people I’ve essentially murdered,”

Nie Mingjue spoke firmly, “You did not kill me, Xichen. You should harbor nothing, especially since these events have not happened to us at all,”

Lan Xichen nodded and exhaled shakily, “Yes...we...we have not even met Jin- Meng Yao,”

Wei WuXian narrowed his eyes, “You didn’t kill Chifeng Zun!”

“Didn’t I have a part in it?” Lan Xichen challenged.

“You were tricked! Tell me this, think about Jin Ling. He’s not even 15 and he’s suddenly the sect leader of the Jin Sect. He’s younger than you were when your Father died. He’s younger than Jiang Cheng when Yunmeng was massacred! He blamed me and hated me, he *stabbed* me because as far as anyone, including myself, was concerned I killed Jin ZiXuan and Jiang Yanli!” Wei WuXian snapped, “But then- then, we find out that’s not the case. We find out that I was framed, that Jiang Yanli died for collateral damage. That she wasn’t supposed to die, it was just Jin ZiXuan who needed to be out of the way so Jin Guangyao could rise to the top. Answer me, are you going to blame Jin Ling for anything that has happened? Are you going to blame him for hating me? For impaling Suihua into my torso when my identity was revealed? Should I blame him for anything?”

Jin Ling opened and closed his mouth like a fish, unsure of what to say. Everyone from the past was trying to process things.

Lan Xichen paused, “..No,”

“Why not?”

“...he was tricked,”

“Exactly,” Wei WuXian stated, “He has lived his entire life hating an uncle he thought killed his parents. But in a few sentences, that is thrown away and he learns that one of the uncles that has raised him framed the uncle he hated. That the uncle he loved was the one who killed his parents. Big Brother...don’t you think I wanted to destroy the entire world when I realized I have lost everything because of *greed* ?”

Lan WangJi pulled Wei WuXian's head to lay on his shoulder, lowering his hand to hold the younger around the waist in comfort.

Lan Xichen looked ashamed, "But I helped him...I gave him the jade token which let him into my sect and find the restricted section and the Collection of Turmoil, I taught him the Guqin and *Sound of Clarity* to play to Da-Ge which was eventually the very thing that caused his death, I didn't listen to my baby brother when he told me to be cautious, that you were innocent, that something was wrong!!!"

Wei WuXian exhaled, "It wasn't your fault. You trusted him, you cared for him. It is not your fault that Jin Guangyao took advantage of your kindness and trust,"

Just hearing his part of the entire scheme made Lan Xichen feel like the world was about to snap on his head.

"Oh dear," Wei WuXian looked at him.

"Brother, have some tea," Lan WangJi urged.

Lan Xichen reached for the tea pot and cup that appeared beside him.

"How is it not my fault?" Lan Xichen spoke pathetically, "Da-Ge warned me as well, he had every right to be angry- I...I murdered my best friend! I helped murder Jin ZiXuan and your own sister!"

Wei WuXian's eyebrow twitched and he lost his patience, "Lan Xichen!!"

"Zewu Jun, you have nothing to do with my parent's deaths," Jin Ling frowned.

Lan Xichen knew that it wasn't meant for *him* , but for the future him.

Lan Xichen glanced at Wei WuXian's eyes wide. Wei WuXian held the gaze, before deflating and closing his eyes, "Xichen-Ge...do you know how I died?"

Wei WuXian suddenly remembered the conversation and sat upright, "Oh, shit!"

"Backlash," Lan Xichen answered after a small pause of confusion, "You tried to use the remaining half of the seal and it backlashed, turning the corpses and ghosts on you,"

"Wrong," Wei WuXian smiled.

"Wei Ying?" Lan WangJi spoke slowly, "When I asked you how you died, you told me it was just backlash and then moved on to another topic,"

Wei WuXian swallowed, "Lan Zhan, maybe...maybe we should go have the conversation, now,"

"Oh, so Xichen already knew," Grandmaster Lan murmured.

"Apparently he did," Jiang Wanyin agreed.

"Both of you know?" Lan WangJi demanded.

"Lan Zhan!!" Wei WuXian tried but Lan WangJi gave him a look and turned back to the projection.

"Wrong?" Lan Xichen blinked, "How is it wrong?"

“Well, I’ve used the seal before. And I had already been able to break it into two halves without a single thing going wrong,” Wei WuXian explained, “It’s kind of strange that a backlash would happen right as you all besieged me, for everyone to see that happen and bare witness the death of the great evil Yiling Patriarch,”

Lan Xichen stared, “A-Ying...what are you trying to tell me?”

“Lan Zhan, please lets go!” Wei WuXian begged, but Lan WangJi didn’t move, eyes covered in confusion and worry.

“Shidi!!” Wei WuXian asked for help, but Jiang Wanyin just looked at him with an eyebrow raise.

“After I woke up back at the Burial Mounds, I tried to think everything had been a dream. But I found no A-Ning or Qing-Jie, and knew it was true. My sister was dead, killed by a sword meant for me. Her son, an orphan at barely a month old. Jiang Cheng, now responsible for a child when he’s rebuilding a sect. I hated myself, I blamed myself, I still blame myself for everything. My sister was the last thing holding me to the ground, she had been the first person I can remember to show me affection, to care about me, to nurture me, to soothe me, to let me cry, to clean my wounds, to...” Wei WuXian closed his eyes as tears swelled up, inhaling a bit and shaking it away, “I gave up, especially after the wen remnants refused to run away. They accepted their death...they wanted me to run with A-Yuan,”

Jiang Yanli’s heart ached and she reached over to pull Wei Ying into a kind embrace, the male smiling.

Wei WuXian smiled pitifully, “The failure that I am, I hid him in a hollow tree and faced you all,”

He looked at Lan Xichen, “There was no backlash that day,”

“Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan!!” Wei WuXian panicked now, standing up and trying to pull Lan WangJi away. The people of the past felt dread turn in their guts, especially at the broken expression on the others of the future, even the juniors.

“Wei Ying!” Lan WangJi exclaimed, speaking with his brother in the scene, “ **how did you die?**”

“With all my pain, all my guilt, everything. With my sister gone and my brother pointing a sword at me, I didn’t see a point in trying to care or try to fight. Let alone live in a world that had taken everything from me since I was five,” Wei WuXian admitted and then with a small pause, his voice came out calmly, “So...I ordered my army and ghosts and resentment to turn on me,”

Lan WangJi froze, eyes widening in horror and expression paling. Wei WuXian stopped pulling at the older, his grip weakening on his husband’s hand and he back in his seat slightly angled towards Lan WangJi, but there was a gap between them now. Defeat was clearly written on his face as the secret was now revealed, the emotion increasing as the people of the past gasped in horror. Wei Ying blinked slowly, “...oh,”

Lan Xichen’s eyes widened, “You...”

“Killed myself,” Wei WuXian whispered and stated, “No one knows. Not even Lan Zhan, frankly...I’d like to keep it that way,”

Lan WangJi could feel the room about to collapse on his head. 13 years, they had been married for 13 years, and Lan WangJi had never even- did he know that Wei WuXian had depression? *Yes* . Had he caught his husband in terrible states of mind? *Yes* . Had he been aware to some degree that Wei WuXian self-harmed? *Yes* .

But...suicide? That had *never* even been entertained, let alone an explanation for Wei WuXian’s death during the siege of the Burial Mounds. A small whimper escaped his lips and he felt Wei WuXian quickly embrace him, Lan WangJi gripping the smaller tightly as he listened to the conversation.

“Why...why are you telling me this?” Lan Xichen panted, obviously thrown off completely.

“Because you’re doing the same exact thing as I did. Isolation, grieving in guilt, pulling away from people that still need you,” Wei WuXian explained with a pained look.

It was weird, for the people of the past to see. They had gotten used to Wei WuXian having two different faces, but they knew the similarities. And as time went on, they could see how the longer Wei WuXian seemed to be in Mo XuanYu’s body, he seemed to look more and more like his former self. It was another reason why they didn’t have much time doubting that Wei WuXian was- well- Wei Ying! Because, despite the obvious differences of his robes and the farway look and his height, they could see the resemblance, especially to when Wei WuXian became the Yiling Patriarch.

But this...this empty and hollow expression was...unrecognizable.

“Xichen-Ge, I understand you...probably more than anyone else will. I know it hurts, I know it sucks, I know you want to pay for your actions, that you feel alone, but that’s the difference between us. You’re not alone, you have your baby brother, your uncle, your sect, your juniors. Huaisang and Jiang Cheng are there as well, even though you’re not close, there’s no harm in trying. All three of you are in similar situations, anyway. You can help one another,”

Deep breath.

“I don’t want to see someone go through what I’ve gone through. When I was young, I never wanted to let anyone I know grow up without parents...that worked out great, didn’t it?” He saw Lan Xichen’s expression and got to the point, “The point is...I see what you’re doing and I understand why. But I don’t want you to do it. No matter the past, because theres nothing more we can do for them. We can live better, do what we can. Huaisang is still alive, if you feel that guilty...you could help Huaisang. He lost just as much as you did...”

“I killed them...”

“And I’m a notorious mass murderer who is living and sleeping with the chief cultivator and acting sect leader of the GusuLan Sect,” Wei WuXian challenged, and then sighed, “I gave up everything, I died never wanting to come back because I thought I lost everything, when I didn’t. I had A-Yuan, I could’ve escaped with him. I could’ve done a lot of things, but I didn’t. And I have more blood on my hands than most people...I’ve got a lot more than you, so if you are repenting here for two people, one whom hurt you, then I might as well kill myself all over again,”

“A-Ying,” Lan Xichen reached forward, squeezing the younger’s hand tightly.

“Shixiong,” Jiang Wanyin’s voice broke, staring at the male, who had a face of defeat clear as day. Lan WangJi’s entire face was slack with pain as he turned from the conversation to stare at Wei WuXian, who had hung his head. The juniors were shocked to their cores. The people of the past were unnerved. Wei Ying was probably the only normal one, listening and just letting it sink in. Everything he had done, every single person he had- *would* fail. His chest began to hurt painfully.

Wei WuXian let him, the two pausing in silence. He then spoke softly, “Lan Zhan misses you. Even though he doesn’t say it, I know he misses his big brother more than he lets anyone know. And, he needs you...a lot, especially at the moment,”

“WangJi has always been capable,” Lan Xichen looked down, “More so than myself,”

Lan Xichen knew exactly who he was seeing in himself and he hated it. And he knows his Uncle saw it too, the way his face had fallen into defeat and darkness. Lan Xichen looked at his brother, face blank, but Lan Xichen knew Lan WangJi was thinking of their Father and Uncle. The one thing he never wanted to force his brother into, was happening right in front of his eyes. Had happened. And he hated every bit of it.

Wei WuXian looked at the table, “He’s been arguing with your uncle and elders a lot, especially since they despise every cell in my body...I don’t know if he told you, he probably didn’t...but our wedding got confirmed,”

Lan Xichen’s eyes widened, “That’s wonderful! WangJi has been speaking with the elders for almost two years, correct?”

Wei WuXian nodded. Lan Xichen smiled softly, “Congratulations, A-Ying. When is it?”

“...eight months,”

Lan Xichen’s smile vanished, “ *Eight months ?!*”

“That’s not enough time to plan a wedding, let alone one for the chief cultivator and acting sect leader,” Madam Jin blinked, everyone slowly recovering from the shock of before(except one person).

“The Lan elders wouldn’t budge,” Jiang Wanyin informed grimly, “Also, those two were already living together at Gusu and had long since eloped. They just needed it to be official,”

“Of course you were already eloped and living together,” Yu ZiYuan sighed tiredly.

“Its okay, a lot longer than we need since it won’t be that big of a wedding. I mean, Lan Zhan is chief cultivator, so people are expected to come, but not many people are fond of me at all, so it’s not going to be very large,” Wei WuXian shrugged, “A more traditional wedding is what Lan Zhan said, but he barely has time to plan with me, so A-Yuan and JingYi hang around when they can. Jiang Cheng has also been a great help, when I told him he offered to plan everything and visits weekly. Huaisang heard of it and said he could manage all the decorations. Jin Ling is still settling in at Koi Tower as Sect Leader...but he offered to help make my robes, something about technically being his uncle two times over,”

Multiple smiles formed.

Jiang Yanli grinned brightly, “Our A-Xian will get a beautiful wedding,”

Wei Ying hummed and nodded.

Lan Xichen blinked and then frowned, “The elders aren’t helping you at all, are they?”

Wei WuXian winced, “Its- its okay. I told you, I don’t mind them. They...they should hate me for what I caused Lan Zhan to suffer through,”

Lan WangJi’s hold tightened and his teeth gritted. Spite was clear as he broke his silence, voice breaking as he exclaimed, “They’re not your fault!!”

Wei WuXian grimaced at the emotions of rage and pain, tightening his grip. Grandmaster Lan closed his eyes in guilt and pain, but only after sending his past self a look.

Lan Xichen stared at him and then spoke softly, “A-Ying, thank you for speaking with me, telling me what happened at the siege, and informing of the wedding,”

Wei WuXian nodded, standing up when Lan Xichen did. Lan Xichen dropped his hands and walked towards a screen. The scene progressed to the point where Lan Xichen walked out, dressed in proper robes. He then motioned to the door, taking his sword and Xiao, attaching it to his waist. Wei WuXian blinked, “Ah?”

“I have a few elders to scold, an uncle to lecture, and a baby brother to unburden,” Lan Xichen smiled and they walked out of the Hanshi.

Only then did the scene end and the room returned to Lotus Pier.

There was silence, the tension of the conversation and everything they had seen weighing down on the room. Lan WangJi’s self restraint broke and his voice came out strangled, “Wei *Ying* !!”

Wei WuXian swallowed and forced himself to pull back slightly, only enough to see his husband’s face. He saw it, he saw the anguish, the pain...guilt. God, he hated that emotion so

much. Wei WuXian felt his mouth move, voice coming out much too calm, “My love,”

Lan WangJi’s expression turned worse, “You- the siege-”

Wei WuXian turned away, “Lan Zhan, you weren’t supposed to know,”

“Wei WuXian!!!” Lan WangJi yelled absolutely broken and everyone in the room startled, all eyes on the conversation.

Wei WuXian’s eyes flew wide at the sudden use of his courtesy name, getting a good look at the emotions on Lan Wangji’s face. Wei WuXian’s expression softened and he reached out and cupped the taller’s face, “Lan Zhan it...it really isn’t that big of a thing-”

He stopped the moment he saw the emotions get worse. He knew the anger wasn’t directed at him, nor was it anger at all. It was pain, terrible, terrible pain and grief. Lan WangJi hated any mentions of Wei WuXian’s death, not only because it was such a painful topic for him, but because it reminded both of them of their failures. Because it reminded *him* of how much of a coward he had been until it was far too late to do something.

Jiang Wanyin glanced between them and spoke kindly, “WangJi, ShiXiong, why don’t you two go to your room for a while...”

Wei WuXian glanced back and then at Lan WangJi, who returned back into the tight embrace, a slight tremble in his figure. Wei WuXian gave a pathetic smile and nodded, “Yeah, w-we’ll do that...”

He wrapped his hands firmly around the older’s neck and his legs around the male’s waist as Lan WangJi stood up. Without caring for anything else, Lan WangJi walked towards the Swords Hall, but turned left instead of walking into the actual hall. He passed the silent hallways, focused on the body in his arms and the breathing near his ear. He found the room and pushed open the door, and kicked it shut behind him. He then came to a stop in front of the bed, Wei WuXian unwrapping his legs to sit down on the edge. Their hands slowly fell from one another, silver and gold clashing.

There was a pause, until Lan WangJi whispered through gritted teeth, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Because of this,” Wei WuXian answered with a deep breath and pointed straight at the males chest, “This. The guilt you’re feeling for no reason,”

“No reason?” Lan WangJi repeated, “Wei Ying, it isn’t about me stopping your death, I know realistically, with my punishment I couldn’t have done anything, especially if you were the one to orchestrate it! But, after we married? I have seen you slit your wrists, cry, wail, scream, thrash, faint, drink, enclose yourself in a cocoon of resentment energy, I know very well how terribly broken you are and how much pain you’ve hidden in your heart. And you *promised* -” his voice broke and Lan WangJi inhaled a bit, a single tear passing down his cheeks, “You promised you would tell me, you promised I could help you, you promised, Airen, you promised!!”

It hurt. It hurt so much.

Wei WuXian flinched at the word *promise* . He hated that word, he hated it with every drop of blood in his body and on his hands. His eyes fell to the ground in shame. What was he supposed to even say? That he was sorry when he really wasn’t? That despite the scene in front of him, he didn’t feel bad for not telling his husband? That he did not feel any sort of regret for ending his own life?

Wei WuXian’s voice came out calm once more, words identical to the one’s he told his brother in that cursed temple 14 years ago, “I’m sorry...I broke my promise...”

Lan WangJi’s expression shifted and he sucked in a harsh breath. He let a pathetic dark and painful laugh, his self control tarnished at the moment. Wei WuXian glanced up at the sound to see Lan WangJi looked utterly defeated and hopeless. Wei WuXian’s heart squeezed painfully and he hesitantly reached forward, “A-Zhan...”

“No, do not,” Lan WangJi told him sharply and Wei WuXian let the hand fall back again, the tone of the words making him flinch back. The elder looked at Wei WuXian for a few

seconds, before saying, “Did you attempt anything else...the past 20 months? Did you harm yourself?”

Wei WuXian blinked slowly and wordlessly pulled up the sleeves of the white robes, revealing a number of faded scars. Lan WangJi’s eyes widened, “Scars?”

“I...I sealed my golden core so they would stay...” Wei WuXian whispered, avoiding the gold.

Lan WangJi had to force himself to remain standing, but his tone betrayed him, “you...”

Wei WuXian winced at the anger and pain, hiding the marks once more and sniffing, tears running down his face again, “Lan Zhan, I really don’t know what else you want me to say. I’m shattered, we both know this!”

“You were healing,” Lan WangJi fell to his knees, crouching down in front of his husband, his own eyes brimmed with salty water, “You were healing...”

“But then you *died*,” Wei WuXian looked at him, “You died, you left, and it hurt so much more than getting crushed to a powder,”

Lan WangJi’s heart clenched, throat choking up. He shook his head and couldn’t help but snap slightly, “And because I died, you decided to drink yourself till you pass out, slit your wrists, seclude yourself, starve yourself, pull away from everyone AGAIN?!!”

Wei WuXian yelled right back, “YES!!! YES, LAN ZHAN!!”

Lan WangJi’s breathing hitched.

Wei WuXian let out a sob, “Yes, I did, because I lost everything!! NO! Do not mention the others, our friends, our families, the kids! I could not dare myself to go close, because every

single person I touch DIES!! I am cursed and others suffer because of me!! My parents, Shidi's parents, my sisters, Jin ZiXuan, A-Ling, our son, YOU!!! I am a liability and I killed myself for it!!!!”

The tears were falling rapidly from both of them.

“And you...you...Hanguang Jun, my Lan Zhan, the light of my life,” Wei WuXian choked, “Are the exact opposite. You are all things good and pure. You are a deity of the Heavens and I sometimes despise it that you fell for me, because I am not worth all you give me, I am not worth a drop of anything but eternal pain and suffering,”

“Wei Ying-”

“No, I will not listen to you tell me otherwise!!” Wei WuXian screamed, “Because I don't trust those words!! I have heard it a thousand times, but it has never-and will never be true!!! Because I am Wei WuXian!!! I am the ghost that has no envy, because I do not deserve the happiness others do!!!”

Lan WangJi's heart was slowly shattering and he tried again, “My love-”

“My love, he says,” Wei WuXian laughed pathetically, “I can't have it, I shouldn't have it! I should've died with my parents! We should have never met!”

Lan WangJi's heart turned cold and hollow and he yelled louder than he ever has before, he doesn't even doubt the others may have heard or felt the burst of spiritual energy that *erupted* from him, “WEI WUXIAN!!!!”

Finally, Wei WuXian halted, his broken gaze looking at the devastated golden one. Lan WangJi sobbed, cupping the male's face and pushing their foreheads together, “I love you,”

“Stop it,”

“Wei Ying, you will listen to me even if you don’t trust me. I will prove it to you,” Lan WangJi looked at the silver firmly.

His expression softened right after with a small smile carved into the handsome face, but his eyes held the pain caused by his husband’s words, “I like you, love you, fancy you, want you, need you, I don’t want anyone but you, it cannot be anyone but you,”

Wei WuXian looked at him, the weight of the words making the walls he had set up over the last 20 months shake. Lan WangJi caressed the younger’s face, “My A-Ying is good, my A-Ying is pure, my A-Ying is beautiful, perfect, loving, and so, so, selfless,”

The walls began to crack.

“But my A-Ying has suffered, has been hurt, has gone through terrible pain and yet his smile is the brightest in the world,”

The walls began to crumble.

“My A-Ying is my life, my happiness, my everything. He is loved, deserves to be loved. He deserves to be happy, to be praised, to be cherished, to be protected, to be safe. And I will give him that, even if he does not want me. Even if he refuses and believes himself unworthy of such things because he is afraid of losing it. I will stay with him, I will love him, I will give him happiness and praises. I will cherish and protect him. I will keep him safe. I will give him *everything* and *anything* , because I love him,”

The walls broke.

Wei WuXian wailed, his body shaking violently as he cried, pulling the older man up and pressing their lips together. Lan WangJi held him tightly, his spiritual energy entering the younger in a way so familiar to them. Feeling the warmth, Wei WuXian gasps softly, sharing his own spiritual energy. There was nothing but emotions in the room, so many emotions.

Lan WangJi laid the other down flat on the bed and without parting from his husband, he silenced the walls of the room and sealed the door. It was desperate, but it was also precious. The robes were pulled away roughly, leaving the broken figure of Wei WuXian bare for his husband. Lan WangJi saw the soft jab of ribs and the evidence of more self-harm. Though his eyes strayed to something different, blinking in shock and confusion, before pained and loving realization took over. He moved forward, giving a tender kiss to the brand mark that his lover's body now bore, identical to the one on his own chest. Wei WuXian inhaled softly, answering the silent question with a sorrowful voice, "Drunk, too drunk. After the first year had passed,"

Lan WangJi did not respond, only moving around to treasure Wei WuXian as he deserved to be, every touch tender. Every kiss spoke a million words despite the sweet honey coated whispers Lan WangJi let out.

Wei WuXian still had tears falling, they both did. Their hearts were in pain for one another and for themselves. Wei WuXian did not shudder under pleasure, but rather love, arms reaching up and pulling out the forehead ribbon. He tied one end on his wrist and the other on one of Lan WangJi's, the male glancing at it and smiling, leaning down and kissing the fabric and intertwining their hands.

There was the ecstasy of sex, there always was, however this was so different than their old rounds. They hadn't touched, felt, loved, one another for over a year. No, they had both gone *numb*. Lan WangJi in death and Wei WuXian in grief. But the hot skin and soft moans were not what either of them were high on, it was just one another. The emotions locking them together. So many emotions, good and bad.

Emotions that would never come out in words- could not come out in words, for emotions such as these did not escape their hearts through verbal commutes, but rather the actions they shared with one another. The fleeting touches, the tightening of a grip, the flutter of lips on skin, the love bites they marked on one another. Everything was a language only they could understand, a language only they could use.

And despite the voice in Wei WuXian's head telling him he was just setting himself up for pain, that he was dooming him and his husband once more, he could not follow through. He could not push the other way and instead dragged him closer. He could not, never could. Lan WangJi was his everything, that meant he was his weakness. Lan WangJi had control over him in a way no one else had before.

Wei WuXian whispered softly, “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you,”

There was a small pause in the other, before Lan WangJi moved forward, giving a gentle kiss oozing with love. He nodded, “Between you and me...there is no need for apologies,”

Wei WuXian smiled weakly and then pleaded with a vulnerability only Lan WangJi was allowed to see and hear, “A-Zhan, please forgive A-Ying for failing,”

“Failing?” Lan WangJi repeated with a soft tone, “My A-Ying has not failed,”

Wei WuXian stole another kiss, the heat of the moment paused, despite the wandering brushes of their fingertips and soft pecks on pale skin, “A-Ying is not strong, he is truly weak. A-Ying caused his A-Zhan to wait for 13 years... but A-Ying could not wait for A-Zhan for 20 months....”

Lan WangJi hated one thing about Wei WuXian, and that was the guilt he always took upon his shoulders, especially for things that he had no fault in. Lan WangJi shook his head, “A-Ying has not failed nor is there a reason for such guilt to be upon him,”

He kissed the forehead ribbon again, “I am here, with you, right now,”

“But-”

“Airen, will you allow your husband to love you?”

Wei WuXian paused, before his eyes softened in defeat and love, lips speaking tenderly, “Please,”

So...can anyone figure out what they should begin to react to next? Like, WangXian, or individual lives, anything. I really don't know.

Song: 'Wake up from an Old Dream' - YouTube (song from the audio drama)

Deceit

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was silent as Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi walked away, the former carried by the latter. Wei Ying's eyes followed them, until they could no longer, the silver orbs dropping to the floor. The silence was heavy with complicated feelings and sensitive questions. Wei Ying could feel the grip of Jiang Yanli, which had tightened with a physical strength the boy was unaware she had. It hurt slightly, but not as much as the pain in his chest. Slowly, his eyes lifted again and he looked towards Jiang Wanyin, who had an expression of pain and deep regret.

It was a wonder how long they all sat in silence, minds running through all they had learned with the song. The muffled yelling was there, the words being heard in the silence of the dreamspace. Wei Ying's ears had picked up on the words that were louder than others.

“-AGAIN?!” Lan WangJi had yelled and Wei Ying felt his sister's grip tighten even harder, despite the group having no context of what ‘*again*’ meant.

Though Wei Ying could assume. Jiang Wanyin had told them before that Wei Ying- Wei WuXian, spoke of things to Lan WangJi that he did not to others. And judging by the weakness he kept displaying publicly, Wei Ying could assume the darker thoughts were spoken aloud between the man that he was apparently married to in the future.

“YES!!! YES LAN ZHAN!!!” Wei WuXian's voice was devastating, ridden with a broken emotion Wei Ying did not realize he could ever speak to someone.

He did not miss the way the people of the future flinched, expressions turning worse.

“-NO!---DIES!!--YOU!!---killed myself for it!!!!”

The grip of Jiang Yanli tightened with a pained choke, her nails digging so deeply that Wei Ying was sure there would be some small marks. He felt the eyes, the worry. He saw the

flinches and glances. Everything. And gods...he hated it so much. His body moved slightly, fingers curling into fists beneath the lavender fabric. He swallowed a lump in his throat, ears fixed on the yells.

“No!!--don’t!!!--true!!!!--Wei WuXian!!!--do not!!!--happiness!!!--”

Jiang Wanyin covered his face with two hands, while the juniors flinched and turned away or closed their eyes. Grandmaster Lan leaned his neck back, staring upwards with a tired expression, propriety be damned.

“--can’t have it!!--shouldn’t have it!!--should’ve died!!--parents!!--never met!!!”

Before they could even react, they all gasped as a roar echoed out along with the eruption of a powerful spiritual energy, “WEI WUXIAN!!!!”

Wei Ying snapped and he finally stood up, pulling his arm away from Jiang Yanli, his actions getting everyone’s attention.

“A-Xian!!” Jiang Yanli called out.

Wei Ying ignored her, his face contorted into a mixture of emotions no one could deduce. His body was tight with what appeared as anger, blinking slowly. Jiang Yanli reached out again but Wei Ying avoided her grip, turning to stare at Jiang Wanyin, “Lan Zhan marries me?”

The sudden change of topic made everyone sober up slightly and the shock wither. Lan Zhan looked up at the question, narrowing his eyes slightly. Wei Ying ignored the changes and focused on Jiang Wanyin, who revealed his face again. The future Jiang Sect leader stared at Wei Ying, eyes searching him. He then leaned back and nodded, “Yeah...”

“Why is that even important right now?” Nie Huaisang stood up, “We just found out that this Jin Guangyao killed a shit ton of people and rose to the top of the hierarchy in the cultivation world, including, Da-Ge, and Xichen Ge, and had a hand in Young Master Jin’s death, which

ultimately led him to also have a hand in the death of Lady Wen and Maiden Jiang!! Oh and not to mention, we find out Wei WuXian, the embodiment of the literal sun and the cause of all are laughter last year during lectures fucking kills himself and doesn't even see it as a big deal over two decades later!!!"

Wei Ying turned to Nie Huaisang, "As far as I'm concerned, its not that simple,"

"What's not simple? You kill yourself," Jin ZiXuan pointed out, "If I'm being completely honest, out of everyone in this room, the person I feel like least likely to kill themselves is you,"

Something flickered on Wei Ying's expression, but it was gone with an eye roll and a turn back towards Jiang Wanyin. He then asked, "Why?"

"Excuse me?" Jiang Wanyin was now confused.

"Why did Hanguang Jun marry me after all that fucked up shit I did? I-I- mean- he fought his own family when the logical and *correct* method should have been to eliminate!" Wei Ying pointed out.

Lan SiZhui felt something hurt and he stood up, face twisted into pain and anger, "Young Master Wei!!"

Wei Ying spared him a glance, but no longer than a second. Lan Zhan frowned and defended himself, "There was nothing correct to do. You were not a vengeful beast-"

"Wasn't I?" Wei Ying turned to look at him with a pointed gaze and then listed, "Qishan Wen killed my sect, Jiang Cheng lost his core, I got tossed into Burial Mounds from a height that should have killed me. No one knows what the heck happened in there and the man walking out is obviously not the same as the one that got thrown in. And I win a war, slaughtering Wens left and right. And then, when I fulfilled my revenge, life didn't work out so I went back into said Burial Mounds...next thing I know, I'm a rogue demonic cultivator whos revenge has shifted from the Wens to the entire cultivation world..." he turns fully to Lan Zhan, "Please tell me how I'm not a vengeful spirit,"

“Because a vengeful spirit wouldn’t have killed himself,”

Shockingly, its Grandmaster Lan who answers. He levels the young Wei with a gaze, “Wei Ying, listen to me very clearly. There is so much more that has happened individually...these are only the big things that impacted everyone,”

Wei Ying looked at him and then says something that causes most of the group to do a double take“...Meng Yao isn’t a villain,”

“How dare you?!” Madam Jin screamed, “That bastard is-”

“Is a hurt little boy who wants to be accepted,” Wen Qing cuts her off sharply.

“Hurt?” Lan Qiren repeated slightly, “If anything, it seems Meng Yao has caused all the hurt,”

“Jin Guangyao killed my daughter and young master Jin,” Yu ZiYuan sneered.

“But that was under orders...and shijie wasn’t supposed-”

“Wei WuXian, what the fuck are you blabbering?!?!?” Jiang Cheng looked at his brother in disbelief, “That fucker killed so many people and you- you’re trying to justify him!!!”

“No, I’m saying he hasn’t done any of that yet and its not fair to judge him now by whats in the future!” Wei Ying refuted.

“This is our goddamn future!!” Nie MingJue blistered, “A future where we all get deluded by a son of a whore!!”

Jin Ling saw the expression of Wei Ying change. He saw it and hit him like a brick. He knew, he knew well that his Daijiu, Wei WuXian, disliked Jin Guangyao, could not refuse to fault him for his crimes. But he also knew that out of everyone, it was his Daijiu who had the least amount of hate for him...second only to Zewu Jun. And him...he hated Jin Guangyao...but to the people of the past, Jin Guangyao did not exist. Right now, he is just Meng Yao. A poor common boy who wanted to get his Father's approval and complete his Mother's dying wish.

Jin Ling stood up and he snapped, "Enough!!!"

Everyone who had been arguing and yelling slanders of Jin Guangyao stopped, all eyes turning to the Jin sect leader. Jin Ling sighed and sat down, "Why do you all hate a man who does not exist?"

"Jin Ling, what are you talking about?" Ouyang Zizhen frowned, "He does exist,"

"...Meng Yao exists. The poor common kid who just wants acceptance from his Father," Jin Ling pointed out, "Not the boy who killed anyone Jin Guangshan asked him to in hopes of getting approval...not the hurt man who knew it was too late to wash his hands clean of blood...he's innocent,"

"Jin Ling..." Lan JingYi's eyes narrowed, "This man killed your parents. When you thought Senior Wei killed your parents and then Senior Wei's identity was revealed, you didn't even hesitate to stab your sword through his torso!"

"I was 14," Jin Ling defended quickly and then turned away, "Of course I hate Jin Guangyao, but we're giving a chance, right? To fix the mistakes of the past?"

"Its not your choice for who we get to dispose of," Nie Huaisang frowned.

Lan Zhan nodded, "I would rather brother never come in contact with Meng Yao,"

Lan Xichen blinked and spoke carefully, “Its...its something I also agree with. If this Guangyao has caused my family and friends such harm, I rather he stay far,”

“A-Ling, why would you suggest mercy?” Jiang Wanyin frowned deeply.

“...because for all he’s lost, Daijiu would’ve been the first to bring it up,” Jin Ling stated and then looked at Wei Ying, “No matter the damage inflicted,”

Wei Ying’s eyes furrowed in confusion as all those of the future looked towards him with soft gazes. Jiang Fengmian seemed to worry and he asked, “What are those expressions for?”

“A lot of things, actually...” Lan SiZhui muttered and then looked at Jiang Wanyin, “I think there’s something that needs to be highlighted before we move forward,”

“And what is that?”

“Deception,”

A beat.

“Deception?” Jin ZiXuan repeated.

“SiZhui...” Jiang Wanyin was about to disagree, but then paused and thought about it. It wasn’t right, no- it was terribly wrong if they were to forcefully rip off the masks of everyone here. But wasn’t secrecy and miscommunication the core of so many things that went wrong? Was it not the dazzling smiles of his brother that hid away all his pain? Was it not his anger that sent all the wrong messages? Was it not Nie Huaisang’s weakness that hid his intelligence?

His eyes turned to survey all those around him. He met his eyes with Grandmaster Lan, the older male nodding in agreement and understanding. Jiang Wanyin glanced over to the

juniors, who had been having their own little whisper conversation and seemed to have come to a conclusion. Seeing them wait for his word, he glanced back towards where Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian had walked off into.

“Start the array, SiZhui,” Jiang Wanyin agreed.

“We’re not going to wait for them?” Wen Ning frowned.

“No,” Grandmaster Lan shook his head, “Those two...let them. I think its what they both need, especially A-Xian,”

Wei Ying couldn’t help but defend his older self, “You all keep speaking as if I’m made of porcelain!! Even if I killed myself once, it doesn't mean I’m *that* weak!”

Jiang Wanyin’s eyebrow twitched and his face snapped towards Wei Ying, “Do not treat your death like it isn’t important,”

“It isn’t, considering everyone in this room wanted me dead anyway!” Wei Ying deadpanned, missing the shocked expressions from the group, “Minus those already dead during the siege,”

“There will be no siege!” Jiang Cheng refuted.

“And no one is killing you,” Jiang Yanli agreed.

“You’re not killing yourself either,” Wen Qing jumped in and then lifted her head, “From now on, I’m your personal doctor,”

“What?” multiple voices overlapped.

“Lady Wen,” Jiang Fengmian smiled warily, “A-Xian is a part of the YunmengJiang Sect, any medical attention he would require is under my sect,”

Wen Qing shrugged, “I’m not requesting it from you. His health is something a Sect should have no part tampering with,”

“You are a Wen,” Yu ZiYuan hissed, “How do we know you aren’t using Wei WuXian for your own sect’s gain?”

“Because Wei Ying is the only person in this room that did not turn a blind eye to the injustice your sects put innocent people through!” Wen Qing’s eyes were sharp. She then looked at Wei Ying with a soft smile, “Plus, I become his jiejie, aren’t I?”

Wei Ying smiled slightly, “Yes! We will definitely spend time together...but I don’t need a personal doctor,”

“I think its a good idea,” Jiang Wanyin cut in before anyone could process a response.

Wei Ying snapped his eyes over, smile fading, “I don’t need a personal doctor!”

Jiang Wanyin raised an eyebrow and Grandmaster Lan spoke up, “Wei Ying-”

“I’m not your nephew-in-law!” Wei Ying pointed out, “I’m not Sandu Shengshou’s brother, RuLan is not my nephew, SiZhui is not my son, and for the love of all things, Lan WangJi is most certainly not my husband! I’m not the YiLing Patriarch!”

He then slumped a bit, falling back into his seat, lowering his eyes from all the eyes, “Not yet,”

Lan Zhan looked at the people of the future, “You know things, don’t you? Things that are still relevant to our time, but things you only learned 20 years in the future. Its why you speak

certain things and observe interactions with complicated expressions...why you speak of Wei Ying in a way your counterparts do not. You know something and no one else is aware of it,”

The theory made piercing eyes look at those of the future. The juniors exchanged a few glances, before Lan JingYi muttered, “Our future is carved by tragedy. And we believed, after Jin Guangyao’s death, and most certainly after Senior Wei and Hanguang Jun got married, there would never be another tragedy,”

“And it was, it was so wonderful,” Ouyang Zizhen nodded, “We grew up, we fixed things, we learned to communicate. We yelled, lots of tears, but we were happy. Our seniors were more happy than ever,”

Jin Ling glanced at his uncle and grandmaster Lan, both of whom were silent and just listening, “But then...when the curse showed up in Lanling and Uncle Lan, Hanguang Jun, died...when we all watched as Daijiu...” he paused and inhaled a bit before choking, “When we all watched everything crumble, there were so many things we lost,”

“Not just happiness,” Lan SiZhui explained seeing the expressions, “...I mean, sure- it was lost in a way, but our lives kept going and eventually we all got over it, all of us except A-Die,”

“Wei Ying,” Jiang Wanyin spoke softly, “I have seen you at your worst...I have lived almost 17 years of my life asking questions and hiding my grief with rage, I lived 17 years unaware that the only reason I’m here, the only reason I’m even alive is because you sacrificed something no one else in this room could *ever* . And you did so without hesitation...”

Wei Ying frowned and grumbled, “I doubt it was that significant,”

For a beat everyone suspected Jiang Wanyin was about to slap Wei Ying with the amount of hostility and anger that flashed, before defeat and an exhausted expression took over, “Grandmaster, start the array to show deceit. Specifically, Jin GuangYao, Nie Huaisang, and Wei WuXian,”

The two present blinked and exchanged confused glances. Grandmaster Lan looked at Jiang Wanyin hand glowing blue, “They are all quite similar in ways,”

He sent a burst of spiritual energy into the array and the room faded into black.

The scene seemed to buffer for a second, before intense beats of the song played. Three little boys appeared in the center of the circle. One with silver eyes, one dressed in cheap clothes, and one dressed in finer robes. Wei WuXian, Meng Yao, and Nie Huaisang, except they were all kids.

Jiang Yanli cooed softly, “A-Xian, you’re adorable!!”

Wei Ying grinned at once and boasted, “I’m always adorable!”

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes while Jiang Wanyin laughed amused.

Unbeknownst, Lan Zhan was staring at the younger version of Wei Ying with shock. Hadn’t he seen this child before?

The scene switched and they saw the three males grown up, Wei WuXian dressed in black and red robes with a cocky smirk on his lips, Jin Guangyao smiling with a glint of coldness, and Nie Huaisang with a fan covering the bottom half of his face, but his eyes sparkled with satisfaction.

Laughter sounded above them, the three males speaking together in a sort of whisper, ‘This is about you,’

“About you? Who is you?” Yu ZiYuan narrowed her eyes.

“...everyone here?” Nie MingJue suggested.

“Or is it about them?” Lan Qiren frowned.

The scene changed to show three different things at the same time. On the far right was Jin Guangyao sitting atop a golden throne in the Fragrance Hall of Koi Tower with a smile. On the left was Nie Huaisang fanning himself lightly as he stood beside a tree, hidden in the shadows. In the center was Wei WuXian who was sitting atop of the Sun Palace with a devilish smile.

“...This is very off topic, but we look very attractive,” Nie Huaisang pointed out.

“We do, I *really* like that look,” Wei Ying agreed.

“Seriously?” Jiang Cheng deadpanned, “That’s what you two are focusing on?”

Wei Ying gave a playful smile, while Nie Huaisang smirked a bit and nudged Jin ZiXuan, before calling out, “Hey, WangJi-Xiong!”

“Hm?”

“Does Wei-Xiong look good?”

Jin ZiXuan couldn’t stop the amused snort which synced with Jiang Cheng’s and Jiang Yanli’s giggle. Wei Ying exclaimed, “Nie-Xiong!”

Lan Xichen was suppressing a smile like many others, while Nie MingJue was laughing out loud with Lan JingYi and Ouyang Zizhen. Lan Zhan glared at Nie Huaisang, before glancing at the Wei WuXian on the scene. He then cleared his throat and admitted, “Mn, very good,”

Wei Ying choked loudly, cheeks flushing pink.

‘Beware, beware, be skeptical,’

The three voices sang together, views changing to show the group as teenagers, all three of them wearing warm smiles with looks of youth and friendliness.

‘Of our smiles, our smiles of plated gold,’

“What is there to b-beware about those?” Wen Ning frowned a bit, “T-they are nice smiles,”

“Thank you A-Ning!” Wei Ying beamed at the younger, who seemed to flush a bit at the name.

The scene suddenly fell downwards and they saw Jin Guangyao looking smugly at a tablet which had the name *Jin Guangshan* on it, “Goodbye Father,”

“The only useful thing that bastard does,” Madam Jin scorned.

Wei WuXian was kneeling in a cave, tears on his face and jaw clenched. He then sobbed and whimpered pathetically, “why...why...why...”

The sudden scene made the mood drop. Jiang Fengmian furrowed his eyebrows worriedly, “A-Xian...”

Nie Huaisang was staring at papers on his desk with a face twisted into obvious hostility and disgust. He then laughed coldly, leaning back and picked up a paper with the Jin Sect motif on it, a letter of some sort. Nie Huaisang glanced at it, before holding it above a candle and letting the peony burn. A satisfied smirk curled.

‘Deceit, so natural,’

“...uh...if you do decide to take him down again,” Jin ZiXuan whispered, “Could you...spare my sect?”

“I can spare you and your mom and all the decent people,” Nie Huaisang compromised.

Jin ZiXuan blinked and then thought about this.

The view flashed and they saw Meng Yao, Wei WuXian, and Nie Huaisang as children again, this time probably only about nine or ten. Meng Yao was laughing, laying his head in Meng Shi’s lap. Wei WuXian was holding up purple robes with an awed gaze, before breaking in a bright smile and beaming. Nie Huaisang was sitting in the shade, laughing brightly and applauding as he watched an older Nie MingJue win a spar.

‘But a wolf in sheep’s clothing,’

The scene changed to show all three of them hold dark and cruel faces, older now,

‘Is more than a warning!’

The streak contrast made everyone do a few double takes. Wen Qing realized, “Meng Yao is with his Mother, A-Ying is getting his Yunmeng robes, and Young Master Nie is watching his brother. These are all significant things to each of them, and we know that the death of Madam Meng and Chifeng Zun are what cause Meng Yao and Young Master Nie to do the things they do...”

Wei Ying smiled subconsciously by the intimate call, but turned to Jin ZiXuan who finished the medics thoughts, “So whatever caused Wei WuXian actions had something to do with the YunmengJiang Sect?”

Jiang Wanyin chuckled a bit and practically confirmed, “Yeah, you could say that,”

Wei Ying frowned a bit, Jiang Yanli and Jiang Cheng exchanged worried and confused gazes, while Jiang Fengmian and Yu Ziyuan glanced at their ward with matching expressions.

The scene swirled rapidly to show Wei WuXian fighting Wen disciples with fire burning all around him, a sword in his hand. His movements were fast and precise, the silver blade soon dripping in red. As he sliced at one's neck, the blotch of red served as a transition to show the red tassel of Chenqing and Wei WuXian now in black and red, playing his flute with glowing red eyes, resentment raging all around him.

His voice sang alone now, *‘Bah, bah, black sheep, have you any soul?’*

“Doesn’t look like it,” Wei Ying snorted.

Lan Zhan couldn’t stop himself from looking at the male, “You are not a resentful beast,”

Wei Ying glanced at him, blinking in surprise at the sudden sentence.

The scene changed to show Jin Guangyao hiding amongst thin curtains of various colors. He was smirking cruelly and reached forward, brushing it aside. The sight ahead was shocking, Jin Guangshan stripped naked and his arms tied to the bed, numerous prostitutes draped over him, shielding his nether regions from the viewers.

“Oh gross!!!” Lan Jingyi exclaimed and Wei Ying rushed to cover Jiang Yanli’s eyes. The Lan’s all looked a little green in the face and Madam Jin turned red at the sight. Yu Ziyuan had a disgusted scowl and Jiang Fengmian’s calm expression tightened into annoyance. Wen Qing narrowed her eyes in anger, while Wen Ning squeaked and covered his face. Jin Zixuan turned away with an angry and exhausted expression.

They all turned pale as they heard Jin Guangyao speak, “Don’t stop even if he’s dead,”

Jin ZiXuan gagged and Jiang Wanyin snapped his fingers, multiple buckets appearing around them.

‘No, sir. By the way, what the hell are morals?’ Jin Guangyao’s voice sang with a taunt.

The scene showed Nie Huaisang sneaking around in the shadows and entering a building. He glanced around and confirming no one was there, he walked to a mirror and pulled out a talisman. He used spiritual energy to activate and walked through the bronze, entering a treasure room. Nie Huaisang walked forward towards one of the shelves, glancing over at one with narrowed eyes of anger and grief. He then grabbed a handful of papers and left.

Nie Huaisang’s voice sang, ‘* *Zian be nimble, Ying be quick,*’

“Zian? Ying?” Lan Qiren repeated.

“Ying is Young Master Wei’s birth name,” Lan Xichen explained, “Zian is Huaisang’s birth name,”

The scene changed to show Nie Huaisang fanning himself in a corner, but his eyes spoke hatred as he glared. Following the direction, they landed right on Jin Guangyao, who was laughing softly and obviously being sung praises.

‘Yao’s a little whore and his alibis are dirty tricks,’

Ouyang Zizhen smirked, “How true,”

The view switched to show the four great sects, multiple disciples training. Jin Guangshan was strolling through Koi Tower, reading a letter in his hand. He smiled a bit, “Wei WuXian, you’re really making this too easy...”

‘So could you,’ Jin Guangyao sang

Jiang Wanyin seethed in anger, but refrained from snapping out.

‘Tell me how you’re sleeping easy,’

Wei WuXian’s voice sang as they saw the back of a boy in purple robes, a sword in his hands. His body was trembling and the sword fell to the grass, the boy’s body following soon after. The scene shifted to show the exhausted expression of a young boy with silver eyes, the male coughing up a few droplets of blood onto the green grass. He stared at the red with wide eyes, panting and trembling from exhaustion.

“A-Xian!!!” Jiang Yanli yelped, alarmed, while Wei Ying froze at her side.

The word repeated in his head, *‘Deception,’*

His eyes snapped up to Jiang Wanyin, who met it with a knowing and slightly apologetic glance. Wei Ying’s throat turned dry and dread filled his being.

Nie Huaisang sang out, *‘ how you’re only thinking of yourself,’*

Nie Huaisang was sitting in a room, Jiang Cheng across from him. They were both older than now, drinking a cup of wine. Nie Huaisang glanced out the door, “So...he told you,”

“He heard of us swearing sworn brotherhood,” Jiang Cheng stared at Nie Huaisang with a hard gaze, “He thought it important there be no secrets,”

Nie Huaisang’s grip tightened slightly, before he smiled tiredly, “Jiang-Xiong, if you had known, would you have not done everything in your power to get revenge?”

Jiang Cheng raised his head slightly, before leaning forward and nodding, “I would. But that doesn’t mean I have to be completely happy you risked the lives of the kids,”

“I didn’t expect them to stick to Wei-xiong like glue!”

“To be fair, they were sticking beside Wangji,”

Nie Huaisang rolled his eyes and then looked up, “Wei-xiong won’t swear it with us. He hasn’t changed his mind?”

Jiang Cheng frowned and shook his head, looking towards a painting in the room, “He doesn’t want any legal afflictions to the Jiang sect yet. And being afflicted with the Jiang, means he becomes afflicted with the Jin sect. He’s already living with the Lan Sect. He says its too risky for him to be afflicted with all four great sects,”

Nie Huaisang closed his eyes and the scene began to shift.

Wei Ying clenched his hands into fists, jaw clenching tightly. He hated this, he hated this so fucking much. Jiang Yanli frowned and asked, “Does A-Xian still not have any afflictions?”

Jiang Wanyin smiled, “He does. He’s currently my heir,”

Wei Ying jolted as Yu ZiYuan and him both snapped, “What?!”

Jiang Wanyin leveled his family with a firm look, “I added shixiong’s name into the registry as my brother, despite him *technically* being my cousin. Then, I made him my heir, especially since A-Mei is of no age to take over should something go wrong and I also do not have a son. So, as my older brother, Shixiong is the current heir to the YunmengJiang Sect,”

Wei Ying stared at Jiang Wanyin with wide eyes, before sputtering, “But- you can’t do that! The bloodline- the lineage- everything! I don’t have a single drop of Jiang blood in my veins, the only reason I’m here is because my dad was the former right hand! You can’t make a servant an heir!”

Jiang Wanyin just stared at him, “I didn’t,” he glared at Wei Ying, “Because you were never a servant,”

Yu ZiYuan’s breathing hitches and Wei Ying’s words fail him.

The three voices overlapped once more.

‘Show me how you justify,’

Meng Yao was kicked down the stairs of Koi Tower, Wei WuXian was sitting down, back pressed against the wall and head in his hands, Nie Huaisang was staring down at a sheet of music with tears of betrayal and anger.

‘telling all your lies like second nature’

Jin Guangyao was smiling kindly as he sat at the center of the Fragrance Hall, Wei WuXian was in purple robes a bright smile on his face as he looped an arm over Jiang Cheng’s shoulder, Nie Huaisang was asleep at his desk, which was filled with studious material.

“...A-Xian,” Jiang Fengmian glanced to his nephew.

Wei Ying looked over and then smiled with a shrug, “I’m just as lost, Uncle,”

Those of the future hated how the worried eyes softened and turned away without a second thought.

‘Listen, mark my words, one day (one day),’ Jin Guangyao sang, the scene showing Jin Guangshan looking over a variety of items with a greedy smile.

The scene shifted to the room where Jin Guangshan lay naked as prostitutes hung over his body and Jin Guangyao was hidden behind the curtains.

Wei Ying was quick to cover Jiang Yanli’s eyes again as Wen Ning covered his own. Jin ZiXuan grimaced, disgust and shame on his face, while his mother turned red with anger once more.

‘You will pay, you will pay,’

“Don’t stop even if he’s dead,” Jin Guangyao ordered and the scene jumped to a new scene. Of the 20 prostitutes, 19 were dead on the floor, Jin Guangshan’s body also laying limp on the bed. One of the prostitutes stared up with fear, her face marked with long scars. She scrambled back, “A-A-yao, A-yao, please-,”

Jin Guangyao turned to her at the name and stared for a second. He then looked at the other male in the room, who was in black robes and was obviously way younger. His eyes were almost like a cainne and when he smiled, it was cruel and revealed sharp teeth.

“Xue Yang,” Lan JingYi growled.

“Who?”

“He’s the reason Xiao Xingchen, Song Lan, and Lady A-Qing, all died!” Lan SiZhui explained and Wei Ying quickly felt anger rise, his voice speaking without a filter, “That kid killed my shishu!?”

“...what?” the adults all chorused, having not heard the earlier mention.

Grandmaster Lan explained, “Xiao Xingchen is a disciple of Baoshan Sanren, CangSe Sanren’s shidi,”

Yu ZiYuan’s heart twisted at the mention of *her* name.

Wen Qing suddenly spoke up, “hey, A-Ying, why haven’t you gone looking for your remaining blood family or your grandmother?”

Wei Ying was about to speak, but he promptly halted. His eyes widened slowly and he muttered, “I never...I never thought to search...”

Jiang Cheng couldn’t help but jump with a frown, “What does it matter? You won’t be able to find Baoshan Sanren anyway, no one can find her! And if your dad had any family, they would have known about you by reputation and searched!”

Jiang Cheng had no idea how much those words had hurt his brother

‘Karma’s gonna come collect your debt!’ Jin Guangyao spat, and the scene flickers showing different groups of people gossiping of the dishonorable death Jin Guangshan had.

“He deserves it, to be fair,” Ouyang Zizhen muttered.

“Madam Jin, I know you want what’s best for Young Master Jin, but it would be in his best interest to begin to take control and have responsibilities,” Grandmaster Lan glared slightly, “I highly doubt you will let Jin Guangshan remain his status after this, but you must for Jin ZiXuan to accommodate and find the corrupt in Koi Tower. He needs to build support,”

Jin ZiXuan withered slightly, the pressure he would be facing from his mother after this already weighing on him. He hung his head, unaware that Nie Huaisang glanced at him worriedly.

The three male's sang together, *'Aware, aware, you stalk your prey,'*

Jin Guangyao was sneaking around the shadows of Cloud Recesses. The scene shifted to show Wei WuXian sitting on a window sill, a cold smile on his face as he stared at the single male in the room. Wen Chao, who was as pale as snow and was screaming, thrashing around and harming himself, all while Wei WuXian watched. The scene changed again to show Nie Huaisang standing behind a tree, fanning himself softly as he glanced over to see the backs of Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi walking somewhere.

Nie Huaisang sang, *'With criminal mentality,'*

“Wow,” Nie Huaisang deadpanned, “Wei-Xiong, we’re cruelly awesome,”

Wei Ying flinched, “That...that’s not something to be proud of,”

“Eh, you can,” Nie MingJue pointed out, “Really, the two of you are just getting revenge here,”

“And what of all the other death’s Young Master Wei caused?” Madam Jin raised an eyebrow, “That wasn’t revenge,”

Wei Ying withered and Jiang Wanyin had to take a deep breath to restrain himself.

Jin Guangyao sang, *'You sink your teeth into the people you depend on,'*

Lan Xichen stood in front of Jin Guangyao with a kind smile, “Why don’t you play Song of Clarity for Da-Ge to help him?”

“Er-ge...”

Nie MingJue was behind them, “Xichen, A-Yao has barely begun learning,”

“And he is gifted,” Lan Xichen smiled, “Plus, A-Yao has more leeway to help you than I do. I will have to focus on rebuilding my sect, not to mention WangJi is in a current dilemma,”

Jin Guangyao smiled, “I will do my best,”

Lan Xichen patted his shoulder, “Of course, I believe in you,”

Lan Xichen grimaced, shaking his head with a sigh, “I can’t believe it,”

“He fooled everyone,” Jin Ling comforted oddly.

Wei WuXian’s voice, *‘Infecting everyone, you’re quite the problem,’*

Wei WuXian was in a cave, on his knees and trembling. He gripped his head and screamed in anger, resentment bursting out from him. As it did, the scene flashed showing various dead bodies, the Yunmeng massacre, Jin ZiXuan, Jiang Yanli, Wen Qing, Wen Ning.

Wei Ying covered his face and groaned. He peeked out and whispered, “There's so many...”

Jiang Yanli looked at her brother and frowned, “none of this was your future’s self’s fault,”

Wei Ying didn't believe her.

Jin Guangyao seemed to be packing, throwing a variety of things into qiankun pouches. Behind him was Su She, who watched with a worried gaze, "Sect Leader Jin-"

"Be quiet!" Jin Guangyao hissed and then sighed, "Damn it, damn it, everything was completely perfect but Xuanyu just *had* to revive Wei fucking WuXian!" he turned around and said, "Let's go to Yunping. Once I pick up my mother's corpse, I'm leaving. I have no way of staying safe, especially with that letter!"

***'Fee-fi-fo-fum, you better run and hide!'* Jin Guangyao's voice echoed.**

"Daijiu was right!" Jin Ling exclaimed, "He was really trying to run away!"

"Of course he was," Lan JingYi sneered, "His entire status was earned with him running away and kissing up to Wen Ruohan's feet,"

***'I smell the blood of a petty little coward,'* Wei WuXian's voice sang and they saw Wei WuXian stumble around his cave.**

His hair was a mess and his eyes were bloodshot, evidence of heavy crying. His hands gripped the "table" messily, things falling and crashing to the ground. Wei WuXian let out a choked gasp and he fell to his knees, head shaking violently, "Stop...stop...I'm leaving, I'll leave! I will, shut up!!"

A pained gasp and Wei WuXian's mouth spilled with blood.

Wei Ying cringed, while others felt their hearts squeeze.

Wei WuXian was speaking to someone, but there was no one else in the vicinity. He rose to his feet shakily, ignoring the blood on the floor and dripping down his lips. He turned

around and muttered in a daze, “Rule number 1, know when to fucking run,”

Wei Ying’s breathing faltered as the familiar words sent his mind back to a time he was so desperate to forget.

Those around him did not understand, Jiang Cheng tilting his head, “Is that a rule we learned?”

“No,” Lan Zhan responded slowly, while Lan Xichen added, “I’ve never heard of this rule,”

“Is it...from the war time?” Jin ZiXuan suggested.

Jiang Wanyin shook his head, frowning deeply. He glanced to Wei Ying, who hadn’t even responded, but from the slightly paler complexion, Jiang Wanyin confirmed that Wei Ying knew *exactly* where this rule came from.

Nie Huaisang’s voice taunted once more, ‘*Ying be lethal, Zian be slick,*’

They watched as Wei WuXian played an eerie tune on Chenqing, eyes blood red. The scene then showed Nie Huaisang, shaking his head as someone asked about something, “Ah, I don’t know, I don’t know,”

“Bullshit,” Jiang Wanyin scoffed.

“Ah, Sandu-xiong, you’re so cruel. After this, I’m really not going to have an excuse to laze around anymore!” Nie Huaisang whined.

“So you do know you’re lazing around!” Nie MingJue glared and Nie Huaisang squeaked, gripping Jin ZiXuan’s robes, “Ah! Jin-Xiong, help me!”

Jin ZiXuan rolled his eyes, but wordlessly raised an arm for Nie Huaisang to hide behind.

‘Yao will leave you lonely, dying in a filthy ditch,’

The scene showed Wei WuXian standing not too far away from two males in Jin robes. The first on the ground was Jin ZiXun, the second standing, was an older version of Jin ZiXuan. And he looked frustrated, yelling at Wei WuXian, “Wei WuXian! Call off Wen Ning and come back to Koi Tower with me! We’ll figure this out!”

“Call off Wen ning?! Jin ZiXuan, I call off Wen Ning, I’ll be pelted with a hundred arrows!!” Wei WuXian screamed and the group saw the array flicker before the scene suddenly grew large.

They all yelped startled, but glanced around. The scenery was a sort of pass, Wei WuXian and Jin ZiXuan were in front, and up above, they could see Jin disciples fighting a fast fierce corpse which could only be Wen Ning.

Jin Ling’s eyes widened, “This is Qiongqi path!”

Jin ZiXuan shook his head, “They won’t!”

Wei WuXian laughed mockingly, “Jin ZiXuan! Did you really not have any idea that they would ambush me? Is that the only reason you bothered inviting me!”

Jin ZiXuan’s expression twisted and he shook his head, “Wei WuXian, stop this! Let me take care of it and come to Koi Tower with me!”

Wei WuXian’s anger heightened and his eyes turned red, he yelled, “Jin Zixuan! You stay back, I don’t want to hurt you!!”

Seeing this, Jin ZiXuan didn't listen and ran forward, "Wei WuXian, stop! A-Li is still-"

"A-RONG!" Madam Jin screamed as Wen Ning came from nowhere and the arm pierced through Jin ZiXuan's chest, just before the heir could reach Wei WuXian.

Wei WuXian's eyes widened and the red promptly faded as shock and horror was clear. The hand pulled out and Jin ZiXuan spat out blood. He gripped his chest as his sword fell to the ground, a weak smile. He stepped forward and whispered, "A-Li...A-Li is still waiting for you..."

He fell to the ground as the scene shifted to Jin Guangyao standing behind a wall, gossip of the Jin heir's death echoing from around the corner. A solemn smile curled at his lips and he muttered, "My apologies, brother,"

Jiang Wanyin shook his head with a heavy sigh, "Thus began Shixiong's downfall,"

Wei Ying didn't know how much more of the pain in his chest he could take, before he couldn't suppress it any more.

***'So could you'* Wei WuXian sang as the scene fell to show brief flashes of the siege of the Burial Mounds.**

The sects charging forward, Wei WuXian raising his corpses, dead bodies of both sides, Wei WuXian and Jiang Cheng fighting, Wei WuXian raising his hand to destroy the Stygian Tiger Seal.

***'Tell me how you're sleeping easy'* Jin Guangyao sang, an image of Jin Guangshan on the screen draped with concubines and obviously drunk, "Buy her freedom, pah! Why would I waste money on her? Plus, she learnt useless skills such as reading and writing, even having that whore son. No, no, she would've caused too much problems and argue too much. Useless woman!"**

Wen Qing glanced at how red Madam Jin was and wordlessly stood up, pouring out some tea. She carefully walked over and handed it to the woman, speaking, “Drink this,” and then returning to her seat. Madam Jin stared after her dumbfounded, but she drank the calming tea anyway.

‘How you’re only thinking of yourself’

The sects all sat in the hall of the Jin sect, a banquet going on. Cups were raised and cheers were sang. At first glance, it was joyous. Until the words registered.

“To the death of Wei WuXian!”

Wei Ying turned away, closing his eyes and gritting his teeth. Lan Xichen and Nie MingJue both flinched, guilt appearing fast. Lan Zhan, Jiang Yanli, and Wen Qing all frowned deeply, eyes darkening. Jiang Cheng scowled. The future counterparts all sighed, frustrated and angry at the scene. Jin ZiXuan and Nie Huaisang both frowned, displeasure clear. The adults of the room all seemed to tense.

“We are also here to pick a chief cultivator,” Sect Leader Yao reminded and then stood up, “If I may, I pick, Sect Leader Jin!”

Jin Guangshan laughed and shook his head, “You are too kind,”

Everyone in the room felt their expression’s darken with the fake humbleness. Lan Qiren spat, “How blind must we have gotten,”

“How bling you must be,” Grandmaster Lan corrected, “When something went wrong, we placed all the blame on A-Xian. He even got kicked out when he was defending Maiden Jiang, while Young Master Jin merely had to copy rules,”

“Young Master Jin is a different situation,” Lan Qiren frowned, “He’s an heir,”

Wei Ying tried not to hear, but he did. And once more, he was reminded of his place.

‘Show me how you justify’ Nie Huaisang’s voice sounded.

The scene showed Nie Huaisang sitting at a table, Lan WangJi beside him. In front of them were a variety of papers. Nie Huaisang glared at Lan WangJi, “You’re insufferable, you know that? How could you make me chief cultivator with you?”

Lan WangJi didn’t even glance at him, “RuLan is too young, Sect Leader Jiang is in no state to deal with the entire cultivation world. You have pulled the strings before, anyway,”

Nie Huaisang grimaced, “Are you mad at me because I caused Jin Guangyao’s death, which is leading to ZeWu Jun’s seclusion? Because, I’ll tell you now, I don’t regret any of my actions,”

Lan WangJi finally looked at him properly, “I do not blame you for Brother’s confliction,” he then added, “...and I cannot fault you for your actions. You brought Wei Ying back,”

Nie Huaisang blinked and then his voice lowered, “You know, I thought, once he died, I would be okay. But I don’t think I am...” he paused and traced his fan, “I’ve become a very cruel man, haven’t I? Just like San-Ge,”

Lan WangJi stared at Nie Huaisang and then responded, “You’ve changed to someone you might not have been before, your hands that were once pristine are now dipped with blood,” he added slowly, “But what San- Jin Guangyao, did. What he caused for all of us...those were choices he made. The consequences would have come eventually,”

“Oh my god, they’re friends...” Nie MingJue gasped.

“WangJi!” Lan Xichen exclaimed joyfully, “You’ve got so many friends!”

Lan Zhan’s ears burned as snickers burst from around him, including Wei Ying’s beautiful laughter.

‘Telling all your lies like second nature’ Jin Guangyao sounded and they were back in the temple, Lan Xichen’s sword already impaled into Jin Guangyao, who looked startled.

His eyes shakily rose up to stare at Nie Huaisang, who stood behind with a shocked and scared expression, “Nie...Huaisang...I never expected...you to be my downfall...”

Multiple eyes rose to Nie Huaisang, who swallowed and glanced around with feigned confusion and fear. Jin Guangyao smiled weakly, “Pretending you knew nothing...what a ruse...”

“It’s a v-very good one,” Wen Ning mumbled and Nie Huaisang wished he had a fan to hide behind.

‘Listen, mark my words, one day (one day)’ Nie Huaisang’s voice sounded and they were thrown back to Nie MingJue’s qi deviation, Jin Guangyao holding Nie Huaisang back. The scene progressed forward to Nie Huaisang finding out about the Song of Turmoil piece. They watch as Nie Huaisang stares in horror and betrayal, until a voice calls for him.

“Huaisang?”

Jin Guangyao is behind him.

Nie Huaisang turns around and quickly, he fakes a smile and bows. As he lowers his head, his eyes gradually harden and a face full of vengeance blooms

‘You will pay, you will pay’

“You must’ve been close with Jin- Meng- that person,” Jiang Cheng observed.

“They were,” Jin Ling confirms, remembering a few times.

‘Karma's gonna come collect your debt’ Nie Huaisang spat.

They’re outside the Guanyin Temple which has collapsed. Nie Huaisang stands up, staring down at a brown gauze cap that Jin Guangyao wore. He stares at it and then slowly reaches down, picking it up. A small bit of blood is on the edge of the cap, the red staining Nie Huaisang’s fingertips.

Nie Huaisang stares at the blood for a few moments, before a tired and satisfied smile pulls up. He turns away, carrying the gauze cap as he walks from the courtyard.

“Wow, you kept a prize,” Wen Qing snorted.

“As he should,” Yu ZiYuan approved, “it took almost a decade of patience and manipulation to get revenge,”

‘Maybe you’ll change’ Wei WuXian’s voice suddenly sings softly, the music changing from intense to slower and gentler.

They’re at the siege, Jiang Cheng has just impaled Wei WuXian while screaming, “I HATE YOU!!”

Wei WuXian smiles softly, “You finally said it Chengcheng,”

Jiang Cheng's eyes widen and a tear falls from his eye. And for a moment, they all see the pain and regret reflected on both the brother's faces. The scene progresses and this time, they're staring at Jiang Cheng, who is looking down at the black dizi in his lap. Finally, he reaches out and with a shaky hand, grips it.

His jaw grips and more tears fall. They watch in silence as Jiang Cheng brings the flute to his heart, gripping it and closing his eyes, letting out a few quiet sobs, "Shixiong...shixiong..."

Wei Ying and Jiang Cheng both lower their gazes. Jiang Yanli grips both of them, checking Jiang Wanyin, who stares at the scene with pained eyes and regret.

'Abandon all your wicked ways'

The scene backtracks in the timeline, this time showing the labor camps. They watch as the Jin's brutally beat and laugh, terrorizing the innocent wens. The scene shifts to a bloody Wen Ning kicked to the ground and then a pained scream as a black flag is impaled just above his pelvis, at the bottom of his stomach. The Jin's above him laugh cruelly, watching as he withers and yells in pain.

Jin ZiXuan's face pales and his expression twists.

Two angry and terrified yells of Wen Qing and Wei Ying scream, "A-Ning!!"

Wen Ning flinches at the sight, turning away and pressing closer to his sister. Jin ZiXuan glances over and carefully, he whispers, "I'm sorry..."

Wen Ning looks at him and kindly smiles, "I-it is not y-your fault. This ha-hasn't happened anyway,"

Jin ZiXuan can only think one thing, *'bless his kind soul,'*

Ouyang Zizhen, on the other hand, whispers to his sworn brothers, "...the lyrics that Senior Wei is singing..."

'Make amends and start anew again'

The scene back tracks farther to show Wei WuXian walking around the Sword's Hall, his face pained and...guilty.

Jiang Wanyin frowns deeply.

His hand brushes over the wood and he stares at the purple lotus motif that hangs behind the center seat. He glances over at the seat that is now Jiang Cheng and his mouth moves, lips muttering, "like your father and mine..."

His hand grips his chest weakly and a solemn expression cracks. It shifts away as Jiang Cheng enters behind him calling out, "There you are!"

Wei WuXian turns around, face blank from the sadness, "You were searching?"

The change maker's eyes widen in shock, worry beginning to grow.

Jiang Cheng opens his mouth to speak, but then pauses and frowns, "Where is your sword?"

Wei WuXian stares and then shrugs, "In my room,"

Jiang Cheng's eyes narrow, "Wei WuXian, its disrespectful if you don't carry it. A cultivator always carries his sword,"

Wei WuXian's own gazes tightens, "Carrying a sword means other's will want to fight me, I don't want the trouble,"

A chorus of confusion and frowns bloom from those close, including Wei Ying.

"But you love showing off," Jiang Cheng advances, "You didn't carry it the entire war, then the celebration banquet after. Do you know how that makes you look? The sect's are already wary because of the method you used. I let you off because it helped in the war and I didn't want to deal with that then, but now, its over. You don't need that dizi anymore!"

Wei WuXian's eyes sharpen, "Well, perhaps I want to keep my dizi!"

Jiang Cheng seems shocked for a moment and then snaps, "Wei WuXian! Are you insane? Its the dark path! Why can't you just pick up your sword?"

Wei WuXian glares, "What's it to you if I carry my sword or not? I was under the impression you'd enjoy others not picking fights with me!"

Jiang Cheng seems at a loss and Wei WuXian storms out of the room, only to run in Jiang Yanli, who smiles quickly, but then it fades seeing his face, "A-Xian, are you al-"

"I'm fine!" Wei WuXian says and walks right past her, causing Jiang Yanli to freeze in disbelief.

The Jiang's all stare at the scene in shock. The one thing they all could agree on was that Jiang Yanli was the only person who could control them all (to a degree with her parents).

Jiang Wanyin shakes his head and grumbles, “God, I’m such an idiot,”

“You didn’t know,” Grandmaster Lan looked at him, “No one knew, he hid it too well,”

“And then he left, breaking all ties,” Lan SiZhui reminded his uncle, “Shushu, if A-Die didn’t want anyone to know, no one would know,”

The entire interaction just sparked a million more questions.

‘Maybe you’ll see’

They were before the war now, before Wei WuXian took on demonic cultivation. Currently, he, Jiang Cheng, and Nie Huaisang were all hiding in the bushes. In front of them, was Lan Qiren and Lan Xichen.

Yu Ziyuan’s eyebrow twitched and her voice came out dark, “A-Cheng…”

Jiang Cheng paled and Wei Ying leaped to the rescue, “He was trying to stop me, Madam Yu-”

“Oh, I would hope so!!” Yu Ziyuan yelled at him and then scoffed, “Creating a fool of yourself, do you want to bring shame to our sect!?”

Wei Ying swallowed and then simply bowed his head in apology. Jiang Yanli glared slightly at her Mother, “Mother,”

Yu ZiYuan’s anger faltered at the expression due to shock.

“I heard WangJi got punished with Wei WuXian,” Lan Qiren spoke distastefully.

Lan Xichen smiled slightly, “Yes,”

Lan Qiren sighed and grumbled, “That kid, just like his mother,”

They watched as Wei WuXian’s eyes suddenly widened and he stood up, about to yell, only for Jiang Cheng and Nie Huaisang to hastily pull him back down. Jiang Cheng covered his mouth and Wei WuXian stared at him with protesting eyes. Jiang Cheng’s eyes soften a fraction, but he firmly shakes his head.

“...you can come out,”

They all yelp as Lan Xichen’s amused figure stares at them. Quickly, the rush to stand and Jiang Cheng fumbles out an apology only to stop when Wei WuXian blurts out, “Zewu Jun, my...my mother?”

Lan Xichen seems lost for a moment, before making a noise of realization, “Ah...CangSe Sanren went to school with uncle. She was...ah, well, she was a lot like you,”

Wei WuXian nods slowly and he falls silent, taking the information. Jiang Cheng eyes him for a moment and the scene begins to change.

Wei WuXian is in his room, supposed to be asleep, but he is, very much awake. He is sitting up and staring at the wall blankly. He shakes his head, “She...she studied here...”

His finger’s twitch and Wei WuXian’s expression turns calculating, before his eyes widen, “Ah...”

His expression falls into pained amusement and he falls back on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. He covers his face and laughs lightly, muttering, “I’ve got to get out of this sect,”

Everyone's eyes snap wide open. Wei Ying flinches as Lan Qiren turned to him, "You-"

Jiang Fengmian stares at his ward for a moment and then at his wife. He moves his eyes to Lan Qiren and for a moment, he prays his thoughts are incorrect. He turns to Grandmaster Lan, who met his eyes shamefully. Jiang Fengmian sucks in a breath and then releases it, "A-Xian...A-Xian, why didn't you tell me?"

Wei Ying winces, "I...It wasn't something I wanted to bother Uncle with," he lowers his eyes seeing Yu ZiYuan's accusing stare, "This one apologies to Uncle,"

"And..." Yu ZiYuan narrows her eyes.

Wei Ying turns towards the Twin Jade's and Lan Qiren, bowing, "Wei WuXian apologies to the Lan Sect for his disrespect,"

Lan Zhan is more worried than disrespected, but before he can address it, Grandmaster Lan cuts in, "There is no need for apologies,"

'all the wrongs you did to me'

The scene takes them to Lotus Pier, this time, they're watching a young Wei WuXian, probably only 9 or 10. He's small, smaller than he should be. It's nighttime and he's sneaking around the pier like a mouse. They watch as Wei WuXian glances around, before opening a door and stepping inside. He closes it carefully and shuffles in the dark.

"What the..." Jin ZiXuan blinks and then squints, "Wait- is that a kitchen?"

At once, the Jiang's realize and sigh, three sadly, and one frustrated. Wei Ying shrinks at the reminder of his former habits.

They watch as the young child, who is extremely agile, jumps up and opens up one of the cupboards. He glances around again before pulling down a box. He closes the cabinet and finds another, this one packed with fruits. Wei WuXian sits down and he quickly, but silently, fills up the box with a few fruits, arranging everything as it was. He shuts the cupboard and the box, placing it in his robes securely. He then returns to the door and opens it, slipping back outside. He begins to walk back, but then unexpectedly, two identical figures in purple round the corner and find him. Wei WuXian freezes and at once backs away into the wall, stumbling out, “Sorry, sorry,”

Yu ZiYuan’s eyes narrow, “What? Jinzhu and Yinzhu never told me of an instance like this,”

Wei Ying on the other hand is quick to pale, “ *Shit* ,”

Jinzhu and Yinzhu stare at him blankly, before moving forward. Yinzhu calls out, “Young Master Wei?”

Wei WuXian winces and he looks at the two. He stares for a moment and seems to give in quickly. He looks worried and quietly pulls out the box and holds it out, head hung shamefully, “A-Xian is sorry he took food,”

There was a pause and the twin’s exchanged a glance. Jinzhu crouched down and gently took the box, opening it and seeing the fruit. Understanding slips on her and her sister’s face and she closes it. She asks softly, “A-Xian, did you sneak out to get food?”

Wei WuXian falters a bit at the call but nods. Yinzhu joins her sister, “Is there more in your room?”

This time, Wei WuXian doesn’t answer. He pauses and he slowly shakes his head. Jinzhu eyes him, “A-Xian, are you worried we’ll take it away?”

Wei WuXian’s expression turns ashamed and he drops to a kneel, kowtowing, “Sorry, sorry, sorry,”

Everyone not from the Jiang Sect, gape. Lan Xichen says, “Why is he apologizing so much?”

Wei Ying answers before anyone else, “I was young,”

The twin’s frown and Yin Zhu reaches forward, “Stop it, come on. Let’s go back to your room,”

Wei WuXian flounders as she reaches for him, flinching back. She hesitates before calmly picking him up and holding him tenderly, Jin Zhu following her as they calmly make their way to the young master’s room. They enter, closing the door behind them and lighting a candle for light. Wei WuXian is placed on the bed and he hangs his head.

Jin Zhu softly places the fruit box in the boy’s lap. Wei WuXian stares at it in disbelief, before looking up with doubt and mistrust. He speaks quickly, “Take it! You can take it, but please don’t tell Uncle Jiang or Auntie Yu!”

Wei Ying sucks in a breath, his eyes snapping over to Yu ZiYuan who has frozen at the call, her usual sneer gone and replaced with a startled look.

Wei Ying moves to apologize, but the words stay in his throat. He wilts back, avoiding her and trying to force the sickening hope he childishly kept dreaming of, away

Yu ZiYuan repeats in her head, *‘Auntie, Auntie, Auntie,’*

Jin Zhu and Yin Zhu both frown slightly. Yin Zhu says, “We’re not angry, you can keep the food,”

Wei WuXian blinks and looks up dumbly as if he doesn’t believe her. Jin Zhu added, “You are free to food at any time, A-Xian. There is no need for secrecy,”

Wei WuXian frowns, "...but, but that's not..."

"You don't have to hide here, A-Xian. This is where you live now," Yinzhu smiled slightly.

Wei WuXian stared with wide eyes. He repeats softly, "No hiding? No running? No starving?"

"Starving?!" Multiple voices overlap.

Wei Ying swallows nervously.

They nod in sync. Wei WuXian grips the box with a small smile. He then glanced and says, "Will you tell Uncle?"

"No, we won't,"

"...what about Auntie Yu?"

Jinzhū shakes her head. She then adds after a moment, "You should not call the Madam as such,"

Wei WuXian blinks, "huh?"

He then says, "But, Auntie loves Uncle. And Uncle loves Auntie. Like all those people A-Xian saw before. Like Mama and Baba! If Uncle is Uncle, then his wife is Auntie!"

Wei Ying wants to crawl into a hole and *die* . The paragraph sends a wave of tension and shock through the Jiang's, specifically the sect leaders.

“A-Ying, the Madam might not react kindly,” Yinzhu says and then explains, “You see, she doesn’t know you and the Madam is very protective of her family and children. Sect Leader knows you, but she doesn’t so she is strict and distant. But, later, once you prove to her that she can trust you, everything will fix itself,”

Wei WuXian blinked and nodded with a determined smile, “I can prove it! I’ll be really strong so Auntie- Madam Yu knows she can trust me!”

‘And start all over, start all over again!’

Yu ZiYuan chokes and something that feels like shame and guilt bubbles in her chest. Jiang Yanli’s heart squeezes and she turns to check Wei Ying, only to see him pale with shame and embarrassment. Jiang Yanli’s heart suddenly drops as she realizes the determination the child on the screen had, barely even existed in the boy beside her. *He had given up trying to gain ‘trust’* .

The music suddenly halts and the scene shifts.

‘Who am I kidding?’ Wei WuXian spats, the music little and more of just his voice.

Wei WuXian is on his stomach. Behind him, the purple lightning of Zidian is flashing as the black whip slammed repeatedly against his back.

Gasps ring out and Wei Ying can’t help it when he feels something in him drop.

Jiang Cheng is held back by Jinzhu and Yinzhu, eyes wide with horror as he watches his mother whip his brother. Wang LingJiao sits on the Lotus Throne with a mean smirk. Yu ZiYuan is angry and wielding the whip, “Haven’t I told you over and over again!? I told you you’d bring nothing but trouble to our sect!!”

“...Yu ZiYuan!!!” Jiang FengMian roars as his two children scream, “MOTHER!!!”

Yu ZiYuan responds to neither, just staring at the screen with her pale expression. The earlier words of the *child* ring in her head.

‘Now, let's not get overzealous here’

They’re in Cloud Recesses. Wei WuXian is kneeling eyes closed, though he winced when he hears arguing from above him. It’s farther in the timeline, Lan WangJi is older and Wei WuXian is in Mo XuanYu’s body. Lan WangJi and Lan Qiren are arguing.

“You cannot defend him for every infraction! If he married into this sect he should be able to follow our rules!!”

“He has done nothing to deserve such punishment!”

Wei WuXian looked frustrated and he snaps, “Enough!!!”

Everyone stops and turns to him. Wei WuXian glanced at Lan Qiren and then turns his eyes to his husband, “A-Zhan, my love, let this go,”

“Wei Ying!”

“Strike!!” Wei WuXian orders with a command of such authority the Lan disciple flounders before obeying. The ruler hits Wei WuXian’s back and he grunts.

Lan WangJi’s eyes widen and he steps toward, only for Wei WuXian to yell through gritted teeth, “Another step and he adds a 100 more,”

Lan WangJi freezes in place but he glares at his uncle.

Grandmaster Lan flinches, “I-“

He stops upon remembering Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi are not with them.

Lan SiZhui finally speaks up, “A-Die’s lyrics were about hope and second chances, but he’s suddenly shifted into words that speak of hope that was useless,”

Wei Ying clings on to those words, as do those around him. A foreboding sense drifts over the atmosphere.

‘You’ve always been a huge piece of shit!’

They watch as Wei WuXian, dressed in black and red, enters a cave. He pauses seeing a female waiting for him. Wen Qing. She levels him, “You skipped our checkup,”

Wei WuXian frowns, “What’s the point of checking on me? You said it earlier, I’ve been broken beyond repair. What’s the point of wasting time on something like this? It’s not like suddenly feeling worth something is gonna fix everything,”

Many people feel their breathing hitch

Wen Qing narrowed her eyes, “You heard gossip again. I told you to pay no attention to those stupid sects!”

Wei WuXian glared back, “I haven’t been taught that!”

“No, the only thing you’ve been taught is how to be a god damn weapon for sects who are utterly disgusting and use you for their own benefits and then gleefully throw you away without a second thought!!” Wen Qing snaps.

The group flinches.

Wei WuXian’s glare falls into pain and he lets himself fall back on the makeshift bed. Wen Qing sighs and walks over, bending down and holding his hands gently. She gives a gentle squeeze, “A-Ying, my didi, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that,”

“You’re not wrong,” Wei WuXian whispers ashamedly, “And I let them, I let them use me, over and over and over...”

Shame fills them all while Wei Ying wants to just vanish into a corner. Forget his future, he doesn’t want anything to do with the cultivation world at this rate.

***‘If I could kill you, I would!’* There’s pain in the angry yell.**

Wei WuXian eyes are red and he’s on his knees, holding his head as resentment tugs around him. Wen Ning and Wen Qing are with him in the cave, worried clearly and trying to get to him, “A-Ying!”

Wei WuXian screams in anger, shaking his head. Wen Ning launches forward, immune to the resentment to a degree. He reaches the man who is now his brother and speaks with a serious tone, “Ying-Ge! Ying-Ge! Its okay, Jiejie and I are here! No one can hurt you, you’re safe!”

The resentment wither’s slightly and Wei WuXian weakens the grip on his hair. But there’s a storm of emotions on his face. He shakes his head and pushes Wen Ning away, yelling, “Why can’t they just leave me alone?! I don’t want anything to do with them!!”

A mad laugh rings filled with bitterness. He looks at the Wen siblings with a psychotic look, “Why do I have to pay for all their faults?! Why do I have to suffer for all their fucking choices!!! I haven’t killed anyone who hasn’t deserved it!! I don’t want to walk this path, but what choice do I have?!!!”

He drops to his knees red fading and sobbing weakly, “jiejie...jiejie...have I really lied so much that there’s not even a sign that just maybe...maybe, I’m not okay?”

Jiang Yanli feels something wet on her cheek. The room is in utter silence, just staring at the scene and listening to the words. Jiang Wanyin and Grandmaster Lan desperately want to find Wei WuXian and apologize over and over.

Wen Qing walks forward, her face filled with anger and pain. She bends down and pulls Wei WuXian close, placing a soft peck on his forehead. Wei WuXian closes his eyes and curls into her, tucking his face in her neck, listening to her, “A-Ying, you have done nothing wrong. Never. You have only ever done good, you have strove forward despite all who have tried to hold you back,”

Wei WuXian stiffens and he grips her tightly, “Stop it...I didn’t actually want an answer, I know the answer. I’m not important, not like them,”

Wei Ying can feel the pain grow. It heightens as he sees the glitter of tears on his sister’s face.

Wen Qing’s teeth gritted, “We’re different than them, yes, but you are most definitely important,” she pulls back and Wen Ning crouches with them, the two staring at Wei WuXian, Wen Ning says, “The cultivation world isn’t worth your tears, Ying-Ge. If anything, its admirable you haven’t let your personal feelings get the best of you. You’re strong enough to take them all,”

‘But it’s frowned upon in all of China ’

Wei WuXian let out a pathetic laugh, “What’s the point of killing them? What good will shedding blood do?” he then paused before confessing, “Plus...for all they’ve done, they gave me a home when I had none. I can’t repay that debt,”

Wen Qing's expression turned dark and she placed a hand flat on his meridian. She speaks firmly, "Haven't you already?"

Wei WuXian's breathing falters.

Jiang Wanyin whispers, "He did, oh god, you did. Shixiong, you selfless idiot,"

The scene whirls around and suddenly, they're staring at Wei WuXian whose face is mad with grief and rage. He pulls out the Stygian Tiger Seal and activates it in the center of Nightless City as the cultivation world strikes at him.

'Having said that, burn in hell!!!'

The juniors and people of the past gasp as they watch the resentment whirl and Wei WuXian lose all control, his form just a mesh of black and red, zooming around and killing with his bare hands. Corpses break the surface and the wails echo along with terrified screams.

Crazed and dark laughter echoes around the room. Laughter that was from Wei WuXian, but did not match the laughter they had heard of him in normal days.

"...holy shit," Nie Huaisang whispers.

Wei Ying's staring at himself *slaughter* with terrified eyes. He doesn't want his future, he doesn't want to live it, not if the cost is this. Forget the promise of love and happiness, he doesn't want it. It's too expensive and he's a liability.

***'Oh, oh, oh, So tell me how you're sleeping easy'* Wei WuXian, Nie Huaisang, and Jin Guangyao all sing together once more.**

It blinks before showing them the three as children, smiling and laughing with their family. Meng Yao with his mother, Nie Huaisang with Nie MingJue, Wei WuXian with Jiang Yanli and Jiang Cheng.

The heartfelt change makes a few smiles curl up.

‘How you’re only thinking of yourself!’

Their teenagers now, and the scene was dimmer now. Meng Yao was crying beside Meng Shi’s dead body. Nie Huaisang was arguing with his brother, slamming a door and sitting on his bed, covering his face as his shoulders shook, soft sobs emitting. Wei WuXian was in the infirmary, Jiang Yanli and Jiang Cheng staring at him, the former worried, the latter upset. Jiang Yanli, “A-Xian, how could you miss a meal and not drink water? You know you’re not supposed to do that!”

Wei WuXian frowned, “I didn’t think...I thought I would be fine! I didn’t expect to faint-”

Jiang Cheng yelled, “Wei WuXian! You only just stared to eat properly, are you seriously that desperate to fall back into having one meal a day?!”

Wei WuXian winces.

Nie MingJue frowns, staring at his brother with worried and guilty eyes.

Lan Zhan looked at Wei Ying, “one meal a day?”

Wei Ying glances at him, but then waves a hand. The Jiang’s glance to him, but say nothing, for now.

‘Show me how you justify,’

Meng Yao gets kicked down the stairs of Koi Tower.

Nie Huaisang collapses to his knees, his saber dropping to the floor with him.

Wei WuXian is shoved off a sword by Wen Chao, his body falling into the Burial Mounds.

‘Telling all your lies like second nature!’

They’re all adults now. Jin Guangyao is bowing respectfully with a soft smile, Nie Huaisang is hiding behind his fan, Wei WuXian is laughing loudly.

“...Jin Guangyao feigns respect and polite smiles, Young Master Nie feigns ignorance, A-Ying feigns laughter,” Wen Qing suddenly spoke.

The last point make’s various people snap their eyes to Wei Ying, who stares at Wen Qing with a face of startlement. A collective thought rings, *‘But Wei Ying is known for his laughter and smiles,’*

Jiang Cheng shares a worried glance with his sister, who had wiped her tears earlier.

‘Listen, mark my words, one day (one day),’

This time, they are not shown the main three. They are in a tavern, listening to gossip.

“Did you hear about Lianfeng Zun?”

“Oh, yes! He’s despicable! To think he caused the deaths of his own brother, sister-in-law, son, wife and father!”

“And to think that Lady Qin was his half-sister the entire time!”

“He even wiped out an entire sect because they protested to those watch towers!”

“Hey, hey, its also said, that it was the YiLing Patriarch who revealed the truth!”

“What can we expect? A demonic cultivator such as Wei WuXian was bound to get his revenge!”

‘You will pay, you will pay,’

Wei WuXian is sitting beside Nie Huaisang, the two sharing a few jars of wine. Wei WuXian looks at him and says, “You’ve sworn brotherhood to A-Cheng, even got engaged. Zewu Jun and you talked it out. But why do I feel you’re not at peace?”

Nie Huaisang laughs, “Always observant,” he then points at him, “You know, you and WangJi-xiong should thank me. I’m the whole reason you two are even in an actual relationship instead of pining for one another from afar!”

“I think Big Brother has more of the credit for finally getting my head out of my ass,” Wei WuXian smirks.

“Hey! Wei-xiong, if it weren’t for me, you’d still be dead!”

Wei WuXian pauses and then nods, “Fair enough,” he then glares slightly, “But you could’ve at least given XuanYu a letter for me to read! I almost had a headache when I found out that Mo XuanYu was kicked out of Koi Tower for harassing Jin Guangyao!”

Nie Huaisang scoffed, “That never happened! That was probably another one of his disgusting lies!”

Wei WuXian leans back, “Huaisang, are you happy?”

Nie Huaisang blinks and then sighs. He smiles slightly, “I will be,”

“You got your revenge,” Wei WuXian smiled kindly, “You don’t have to be entirely okay,”

“Look who’s talking,” Nie Huaisang shot back.

Wei WuXian grinned, “I have a wonderful husband who is adamant on helping me through. I trust Lan Zhan, have since I met him,”

“Oh, yes I know. You’d rambled all about him like a lovesick maiden,” Nie Huaisang fake gagged and then in a high pitched voice, he mocked, “ *Lan Zhan is so handsome. Lan Zhan’s calligraphy is so perfect, there’s nothing he can’t do. Lan Zhan-* ”

“You- Shut up!!” Wei WuXian screamed, red in the face.

Laughter burst out and Wei Ying’s face turned the color of his ribbon. Lan Zhan didn’t know how to handle the information that Wei Ying *rambled* about him.

‘Karma’s gonna come collect your debt!’ Jin Guangyao sang

They watched as Jin Guangyao was bowing in front of the elder’s and disciples of the Jin Sect. He rose and took the oath of a sect leader, before two elders walked forward and placed on him the robes of the sect leader. They then bowed and Jin Guangyao

turned around, walking up to the center of the hall and sitting down, facing his sect with a small smile. The disciples all kneel, "Sect Leader Jin!"

The sight make's Jin ZiXuan feel a multitude of emotions, while Madam Jin wants to run her sword through the bastard.

'Karma's gonna come collect your debt!' Nie Huaisang's voice echoed

Nie Huaisang stands alone, facing a collapsed structure that once belonged to the Guanyin Temple. He fans himself, staring at it with a calculating look. Gentle footsteps sound from behind him, and multiple eyes widen as a beautiful female in Nie robes walks to his side. She places a hand on his shoulder and the other over her stomach, "A-Sang, why don't you and Sect Leader Jiang coordinate to build something new here,"

"There's two fierce corpses under that rubble, my love," Nie Huaisang sighed, "Including Da-Ge. We can't just...move it,"

"Why don't you ask Master Wei?"

"I don't want to trouble him more," He turned to his wife, "I can't bring him here, not when he's letting himself relax into some joy,"

Madam Nie hums and then pats her husband's shoulder, "Well, my husband is one of the smartest people in the land. He will come up with something,"

"You flatter me," Nie Huaisang chuckled.

Madam Nie smiled and then tapped a finger on her stomach, "Come on now. The little one is hungry,"

Nie Huaisang raised an eyebrow, before sighing, “Aren’t we only in the first trimester, how do you have cravings?”

Madam Nie laughed, shaking her head amused.

Nie Huaisang’s cheeks are scarlet. He whispers, “That’s my wife,”

Nie MingJue looked at his brother and can’t resist a tease, “Congratulations, you actually managed to get married,”

“Da-Ge!!”

The scene shifts to show Lan WangJi walking into the Elegance Hall of the GusuLan Sect. Beside him, is Wei WuXian. Its a discussion conference of some sort, sect leaders gathered and seated at the sides. All eyes snap to them and focus in on Wei WuXian, who remains unbothered and the two walk down the middle to the center seat. Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian sit down beside one another and for a few moment’s there’s a silence and bewildered looks, except for those who are aware.

Seeing as his brother was making no move to address it, Lan Xichen speaks up, “The GusuLan Sect had a marriage two weeks ago. The Lan Sect of Gusu informs the sects of Hanguang Jun’s husband, Wei Ying, courtesy WuXian. My brother-in-law,”

‘Karma’s gonna come collect your debt!’ Wei WuXian’s voice sings around them.

The scene cuts off and the music stops. There’s a sound of three giggles and the group watches as a very young Meng Yao is scooped up by his Mother. She pinches his cheek and kisses his head softly, “Ah, my little A-Yao! You’re so smart!”

The scene shifts to show Nie Huaisang running away with a joyful squeal, a kid Nie MingJue chasing him, “I’m going to get you Huaisang!”

Nie Huaisang sees a male ahead and screams, “A-Die! A-Die!”

Nie Huaisang and Nie MingJue both feel their heart’s squeeze at the familiar face of their father.

The Late Nie Sect Leader laughs and bends down, scooping Nie Huaisang up on his shoulders. Nie MingJue comes to a stop, playfully whining, “That’s not fair! Father, you’re too tall!”

Nie Huaisang just laughs and sticks a tongue out at his older brother. Nie MingJue gasps and jumps forward, both boys clinging onto their Father, who stumbles a bit and laughs as he keeps his balance.

“Wow...are all Nie’s except for Huaisang that tall?” Jin ZiXuan asked and snorts echo from the room, Nie MingJue included.

Nie Huaisang stares at Jin ZiXuan, betrayed, “Jin-xiong!”

Wei Ying moves to comment, but he then stops as the scene shifts to show three people. The entire room seems to stop and Wei Ying can feel his eyes widen and tears threaten to build up.

A young silver eyed boy is sitting on a handsome male’s shoulder, in front of them a beautiful female with silver eyes and dressed in cream colored robes. The woman, smiles at her child, “A-Ying, my precious baby, look at you messing up your Baba’s hair!”

Wei Ying hears a choke emit from him.

Jiang Fengmian blinks at the scene, staring at the face of his friends. His eyes soften with pain, smiling slightly as he glances to Wei Ying, *‘At least he has a face to put to the name,’*

“A-Se, leave him alone,” Wei ChangZe laughed, “He’s building his grip strength, right?”

Wei WuXian giggled and nodded, “Yes!”

“Are you now?” CangSe Sanren laughs and then scoops forward, picking up her son from her husband and beginning to run around the room they were in, “Well, now I’ve stolen you!”

Wei WuXian screams in happiness and fear. He calls out, “Baba, baba! Help me! Mama is taking me!”

Wei ChangZe laughs and obliges, easily catching the two in a hug. The family laughs warmly, Wei ChangZe placing a kiss on his wife’s head and then his son.

The scene fades back to Lotus Pier.

Wei Ying’s brain is a mess. He doesn’t realize that he’s barely breathing until he hears Wen Qing’s alarmed call and a hand grips his shoulder. Her face is blurry, “Hey, hey! A-Ying, look at me. Focus on me, didi,”

The call makes him take in a shaky breath. His eyes are wide with pain and he blinks, pushing down the tears. His chest hurts *so much* . He wants to cry, he wants to cry so bad.

“A-Xian,”

Wei Ying looks up and Wen Qing steps aside to make way for Jiang Fengmian, who crouches in front of his nephew. He repeats softly, “A-Xian...”

“Uncle...” Wei Ying’s voice quivers, “Uncle are those- were those-”

He can’t say it.

Jiang Fengmian smiles and nods, “Yes,”

Wei Ying lets out a choked sob and then hangs his head, body trembling with restraint. He leans into Wen Qing, who is still standing there, closing his eyes and letting her silently help him calm.

Jiang Wanyin smiles fondly and then says, “Questions?”

“This was about deception,” Lan Qiren is quick to change the focus.

“Yes, its the masks that cause so much to go unsaid and misunderstandings to occur,” Jiang WanYin explains.

“So...no one knew what A-Xian was going through?” Jiang Yanli speaks sadly, “He hid it from everyone?”

“Except Wen Qing and Wen Ning,”

Jiang Yanli can’t escape the flower of hurt that plants itself in her heart. Her other brother is no better, frowning and staring to where Wen Qing had moved to crouch in front of Wei Ying as Jiang Fengmian returned to his seat. His fists clench, *‘What was different about some Wen’s than him and his sister? They had been with Wei Ying far longer!’*

Lan Zhan frowns, “Was it...was it really bad? Wei Ying’s suffering?”

“That depends on if you ask him or others,” a voice spoke up and they all turned their heads to see Lan WangJi walking towards them.

Jiang Wanyin frowned, “Where’s my brother?”

Lan WangJi paused and then informed, “Asleep,”

There’s a small halt and Nie MingJue speaks carefully, “Do we want to know?”

“No,” came the response from the future personas.

Nie Huaisang placed it bluntly, “They had sex,”

Lan Zhan’s face turns red and Wei Ying squeaks, hiding his face in Wen Qing’s sleeve.

Lan WangJi does not confirm nor deny. Instead, he looks at Jiang Wanyin, “Did you know?”

“...know what?” Jiang Wanyin asked slowly and they all felt the mood shift.

“About...about the brand mark and what he did with his core?” Lan WangJi asks with a tight voice.

Lan SiZhui suddenly stands, “Baba...what do you mean his core? We know about the landmark, it happened after the first year had passed,”

Lan WangJi opened his mouth and then glanced at those from the past. Jiang Wanyin and Grandmaster Lan stood up and walked over. Lan WangJi looked at them and spoke softly, “He sealed it to make sure the scars would stay...”

Jiang Wanyin's eyes fly wide and he yells, "What?!"

Grandmaster Lan looks terrified, before saying softly, "Oh, WangJi,"

Lan WangJi lets his Uncle hug him, and he closes his eyes, "I thought he was better, I thought...I thought..."

Lan Zhan and Lan Qiren stare at the scene with shock.

"Hey, none of that," Grandmaster Lan scolded, pulling back.

Jiang Wanyin looks angry, his finger's reaching over and turning Zidian. He sighs, "Go, stay with him. I think we all need a break and..." he looked up in the direction of Wei Ying, "I think we're going to have to break things apart to fix them,"

Lan WangJi knows exactly what that means and he says firmly, "Wei Ying won't forgive you,"

"I know," Jiang Wanyin says, ignoring the way the past stared at them for answers and explanations. He turns his stare towards the direction Lan WangJi had come from, "But if I have to lose him so he can be happy, then that's fine,"

"What?!" Jiang Cheng yells.

Jiang Wanyin ignores him and he speaks out, "Let's all regroup in two hours,"

He then turns to Lan WangJi, "Stay with my brother,"

Lan Wangji smiles and nods, taking off. The juniors all share a glance and then Jin Ling says, “Last one to the docks has to spar DaiJiu!”

He takes off and his friends race after him. Jiang Wanyin and Grandmaster Lan smile after them, before the Jiang sect leader motions to the residence, “Guest rooms are available and the private dock,”

He turns away walking into his home with a solemn face, the questions of the past left for them to ponder. He runs a hand over his meridian and closes his eyes sadly, *‘If I have to lose you so you can be truly happy...then that is a price I can pay. No matter the pain that follows,’*

Zian - self peace (the birth name I have given Nie Huaisang)

Chapter End Notes

Okay, the angst is seriously not getting any better. I'm not sure if I should stick with Wei WuXian's trauma first, or if I should first show the outside forces and then the aftermath...to be fair, I might do that just so we can have a small break from a-ying's suffering.

Also, I completely head cannon that young Wei Ying would look up to Madam Yu, but then eventually, he realizes that no matter how hard he tries, she'll never accept him. And despite this, he still keeps a small shard of hope buried deep in him.

Song - 'Wolf in Sheep's Clothing (ft William Beckett)' - Set It Off

Lost Warmth

Chapter Notes

Ayo; remember when I said I was going to do less angst...aha...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wei Ying walks around the halls of the makeshift pier with a complicated expression. There is much happening in his mind and he does not doubt that when they get out, so many things will be different. He ponders, for a moment, all that they've seen. All that he's learned.

He halts, glancing to a light lavender banner on the wall where the nine-petaled lotus motif sat perfectly in the center, the color a deeper shade. The massacre burns in his head as the image of Jiang Yanli dying bleeds. His eyesight blurs slightly with tears and a hand reaches to his robes, crumpling the fabric above his chest in an effort to restrain the pain.

His free hand extends forward, fingertips gently tracing the petals. His eyes soften, revealing the guilt hiding behind them. He whispers, "How could I..."

He misses the hesitant footsteps approaching him, focused entirely on the banner. He detracts his hand, dropping the other from his chest to his side. Wei Ying looks up, blinking furiously and inhaling deeply. He mutters, "No, no. It's not....its not going to happen,"

"...Wei Ying,"

He startles, gasping in shock and turning to see Lan Zhan watching him, eyebrows furrowed slightly. Wei Ying recognizes this as a concern, worry. The flash of the 33 lashes that scar the second Jade's back flicker and he pales, turning away and frantically pushing on an act, "Ah! Lan Zhan! You- You startled me,"

Lan Zhan watches him before carefully bringing himself closer. Wei Ying notices, from the corner of his eyes, but makes no move to back away, rooted in place and avoiding the gold.

He looks down at his feet, swallowing away a lump. When he hears the white booted feet stop, he glances up with a bright smile, "How did you find me? Or was it you got?"

He stops, lips parting and eyes widening as Lan Zhan's hand is suddenly on his face, carefully wiping something. It is only then does Wei Ying realize a few pearls had slipped down his cheeks. He steps back in surprise, taking a hand and feeling the wet trail. His cheeks turn pink from the earlier gesture and his own shame, "Ah! I must've got some dust in earlier! I'm sorry! Sometimes I daze out so much and I won't even realize something is going on, like this! Tears, so annoying. I hate them. I was distracted and I didn't realize, I'm sorry-"

"Wei Ying, stop," Lan Zhan tells him.

Wei Ying halts and glances at him. They're awkward, he knows it. There's uncharted territory and feelings they are *aware* of but have not actually addressed. Wei Ying isn't sure he wants to take the risk of doing so. Lan Zhan looks like he wants to say something, but is withholding it. Wei Ying, against his better judgment, gives into his curiosity (the curiosity he is sure caused all of this), "What do you need?"

Lan Zhan stares at him for a moment, before saying, "Earlier, in the first song, when...when you and Jiang Wanyin were fighting during the siege-" he takes notice of the small wince and quick change of the silver window, "when he said he hated you...you didn't look very surprised,"

Wei Ying stares at him and then he smiles carefully, "Second Young Master Lan,"

The title makes Lan Zhan immediately frown and the suspicion doubles. Wei Ying steps forward and soon, they're only an arms-length apart. His eyes harden with a guarded aura though the smile remains a false softness, "If you watched your uncle take a sword meant for you, after you killed his spouse leaving his child without parents, and your brother now alone to rebuild a decimated sect and raise a child...on top of being a disgusting *monster* and hated by the entire world...Would you be surprised if Zewu Jun stabbed you and yelled those words?"

Lan Zhan blinked slowly and then answered with a firm tone, "I would not be surprised, but I would still be hurt. You didn't even blink, let alone have a reaction. You were thoroughly ready as if you had been waiting for a confirmation,"

Wei Ying swallowed again and his eyes narrowed, “Lan Zhan, just what is it exactly you are implying?”

Lan Zhan opened his mouth and responded calmly, “Nothing. I just wanted to...” he searches for the right word, and Wei Ying waits, “...check on Wei Ying,”

Wei Ying blinks and then exhales, softening the guarded stiffness in his body language. He smiles kindly and reaches forward. He stutters for a second before committing to the act and his hand makes contact with the jade’s. Lan Zhan, to his credit, does not pull away but does glance down in surprise. His body stiffens for a second before relaxing and shifting his grip to return the hold. Wei Ying feels the tightness in his chest unwind slightly and the smile turns gentler.

“Lan Zhan, I'm fine,” he says softly.

Lan Zhan stares at him and then carefully, pushes a boundary, reaching for the other hand, “Will you trust me if you are not?”

Wei Ying’s smile falters slightly. He then looks down at where his hands are held in the guqin player’s. He doesn't glance up when he confesses, “I don't know,”

Lan Zhan tightens his grip for a brief second. He then nods, he understands, they- at this point in time, have barely held a conversation, let alone used the term *friends* . Yet in the matter of a few hours, their entire relationship was switched, “Will you let me help you if I know you're not?”

Wei Ying glances up again, “...would I be able to stop you?”

Lan Zhan’s silence is an answer by itself. Wei Ying chuckles and then turns his eye back to the motif. His hands slip away and he turns fully to the purple banner. Lan Zhan is beside him, following the gaze. He listens as Wei Ying whispers, “Do you have memories of your parents?”

Lan Zhan thinks about the beautiful smile of his Mother and the few times he had seen his Father. He answers, "Not many,"

"How many years?"

Lan Zhan glanced at the younger, confused, "...Mother passed when I was six..." he then says something those outside the Lan sect do not know, "I was only allowed to see her once a month,"

Wei Ying turns to him, "Once a month?"

Lan Zhan just nods and avoids the silver. Wei Ying stared but let it be. He returns to the banner, "I had nothing. I didn't know their voice, their faces, anything...not until today,"

Lan Zhan is about to say something when the presence of someone makes him glance back. Wei Ying turns as well to see Jiang Wanyin smiling knowingly at the two. He leans against a wall, "Cute, don't let me interrupt your date,"

Wei Ying's face turns red, "We're not- we were just talking!!"

"About what?" Jiang Wanyin teased further.

Flustered, Wei Ying blurts, "I was just telling Lan Zhan how I got my first memory of my parents!"

The teasing smile fades and it gets replaced with a somber expression. He straightens up, "I apologize for interrupting,"

Wei Ying sighs, "No, no, it's fine. I was done anyway. There's not much to say,"

Jiang Wanyin eyes him for a moment. He then looks at Lan Zhan, “Why don't you go on ahead? I want to chat with WuXian for a moment,”

Lan Zhan stays for a moment before nodding. He nods to Wei Ying and then bows to Jiang Wanyin before walking back towards the Sword's Hall where they had all moved to.

When he's gone, Jiang Wanyin walks forward motioning with his head, “Walk with me,”

Wei Ying frowns but follows. At this moment, Jiang Wanyin is taller than the teenage Wei Ying. There's a silence between them before Wei Ying breaks it, “Where are we going?”

“To pick up Shixiong and Wangji,” Jiang Wanyin informs. He pauses before saying, “I know you hate him, A-Xian,”

Wei Ying fumbles a bit at the sudden reveal and name. He glances up before feigning ignorance, “Who?”

“My Shixiong...your future self,”

Wei Ying raises his head slightly, “Why do you say I hate him?”

“Well, you think it's all your fault. You think that all that happens is because of you,” The sharp eyes glance down, “...You don't understand why Hanguang Jun marries him, saves him, why I made him my heir, why the kids idolize him, why Jin Ling can call him Daijiu,”

Wei Ying doesn't understand *how* he knows. How *he* has been read like an open book. He can feel the panic grip him and he lets the tinge of rage take over, making into his expression and forming a glare, “Shut Up!! What do you know?!”

They both stop and Jiang Wanyin turns to him and remains calm, “I know a lot. Things you would never dare to tell younger me,”

Wei Ying smiles darkly and Jiang Wanyin can see the resemblance of the appearance the Wei endornes during the war. It hurts him, to see it, to just have further confirmation that all that darkness had always been dwelling inside his brother. Wei Ying’s voice halts his pain from wandering further, “Ha! If you know so much about me, then prove it!”

Jiang WanYin’s hardens his eyes and without hesitation, he speaks, never breaking eye contact, “You’ve been teaching the street kids how to form golden cores and the basics of cultivation,”

The smile vanished in a flash.

“I know you have alcohol stored in your bedroom secretly and when you’re suffering- when everything is overwhelming and the voices are too loud, you drink to numb it all out,” Jiang Wanyin doesn’t falter.

Wei Ying’s eyes widen and his face begins to pale.

“I know that you look at my mother and some days want to kill her, but a part of you still loves her because she’s the closest thing to Mother you have,”

Wei Ying’s throat turns dry.

“I know...” Jiang Wanyin pauses before his firm tone softens, “I know that you want to know about your parents and hate yourself for forgetting. I know you want to sneak into places to find information on your father. I know you want to find where they died. I know you want to find out how they died. I know that one of the few things you do remember of them is the day you were left alone and every year, you burn incense for two faces you never remembered,”

His cheeks are wet again.

Wei Ying is trembling as he stares at the older version of the boy he called his brother. His lip quivers and Jiang Wanyin steps into his space, pulling the teen into a gentle embrace. Wei Ying can't return it, too shaken from the exposure of some of his secrets. He feels bare, vulnerable, and he hates it.

Jiang Wanyin pulls back and speaks tenderly, "The array is meant to show truth...would you want to learn about your parents?"

A dreadful and desperate hope surges through Wei Ying like a storm. His breathing hitches and he is unable to keep the *child* from his voice, "You can do that?"

Jiang Wanyin nods with a sad smile, "Yeah,"

Wei Ying wants it, oh, he wants it so bad. But he knows, *fuck*, he *knows*, it's impossible. He can't. Not with *them* around. Not without risking the fractured relationship of his sect leaders. Wei Ying closes his eyes and takes a deep breath, calming himself and controlling his emotions. He quickly gets rid of the marks on his cheeks and smiles. It's not as bright as he hopes it to be, "It's alright, I don't think it's as important as other things,"

Jiang Wanyin stares at him before a displeased frown etched on his face. He then sighs, "Forget them. I'm not asking if they'll want it, I'm asking if you do,"

Wei Ying's smile faltered again. He looks to the side, "If you know so much about me...then shouldn't you know the answer?"

Jiang Wanyin nods, "But I want you to tell me," he adds gently, "A-Xian, I want you to make a choice thinking of only yourself, no one else,"

Wei Ying shifts his weight from his right foot to his left. His hands begin to clench and unclench, teeth tugging at the skin of his lower lip. The hesitance makes the Jiang Sect Leader's chest constrict and a familiar anger at his parents rise. Jiang Wanyin asks again, "A-Xian, do you want to know your parents? Your family?"

Wei Ying looks up and then, the hope wins and a minuscule nod escapes him. Right after he rushes, “But we don't have to! It's not important and I don't think it's a good idea to-”

“What bullshit are you spouting?” Jiang Wanyin snorts, “This is my domain, not there's. And what right do they have for denying you your family?”

Wei Ying stares up with an open mouth and bright eyes. Satisfied, Jiang Wanyin turns and knocks on the door beside them twice. They wait for a minute before the door opens to reveal Wei WuXian. He's slightly different, there's a tired but grounded aura around him, he seems more stable than before. Behind him, Wei Ying sees Lan WangJi, forehead still bare of the white ribbon which was laced in Wei WuXian's hair.

“Shidi,” Wei WuXian greets with a gentle smile and his eyes shift to Wei Ying, “Little me,”

Wei Ying nods a bit. Jiang Wanyin says, “While you two were resting, we watched another viewing,”

Lan WangJi breaks the pause, “What was it on?”

Jiang Wanyin does a brief explanation, brushing over many details. Wei Ying's eyebrow twitches that his shameful breakdowns were one such detail omitted. Wei WuXian sucks in a soft breath as Jiang Wanyin explains the last part with his parents.

The silver glances to Wei Ying, “Shidi...why are you with little me?”

Jiang Wanyin straightens himself, “The next viewing, I've decided to focus on you and your parents,” he looks to Wei Ying along with the other two, “Maybe you can get the answers to all those questions,”

Another secret exposed and Wei Ying snaps his gaze to the sect leader. Lan Wangji places a hand to steady his husband, "I think it's a good idea...Airen?"

Wei WuXian stares at Wei Ying, before smiling tenderly and agreeing easily, "Mhm,"

Wei Ying hates him.

He rolls his eyes and promptly turns, beginning to walk back. He hears the future ones follow him, the gentle conversation flowing behind him. He tries to not listen, but he can't help but clench his jaw in disgust as he hears the reserved and *weak* tone Wei WuXian uses.

He's **not** supposed to sound like that.

When they enter the swords hall, it's Wei Ying who the others see first. His expression that was irritated had schooled to a calm one and he stepped aside to hold the door for the future Jiang sect leader and chief cultivator. They, however, halt, seemingly surprised by the action, before bitter understanding curls in their eyes. It confuses Wei Ying, it makes his eyebrows furrowed when they look at him with pained expressions, before flickering somewhere behind him with anger.

Wei WuXian doesn't want to make a scene, not yet. He can see the pent-up pain in his younger self, he has no doubt the dam will break with this viewing. His parents had always been a sore-spot. A mere mention of them made all his teachings and attention fly from the window. He steps forward first, chuckling and patting his younger self on the head, "Okay, okay, go sit down,"

Wei Ying gives a small glare before masking it with a smile and moving to sit. He then finds his two pairs of siblings sitting somewhat close to one another. With a grin, he rushes over and seats himself in between Wen Qing and Jiang Yanli. The two girls smile slightly, before turning the attention to Jiang Fengmian, who rises to his feet and bows to the elder version of his son, "A-Cheng, you seem to be mostly in charge, so it's only right for you to sit at the center,"

He motions to the highest seating position in the hall, the one for the sect leader. Jiang Wanyin stares at the throne blankly, before smiling. He nods and then walks forward, however, with a small wave of the wrist, the petals grow and the seat for one becomes a seat for three. It's still as beautiful, but it's large. Nothing like the normal throne.

A moment of shock and confusion waved through them. Jiang Wanyin ignores it and sends a glance to one person. With a flourish of purple, they watch Jiang Wanyin stride forward and sit himself to the far left of the enlarged throne. Wei Ying (and probably most of them) expects Jiang Wanyin to call his parents, but he doesn't even glance. Instead, he looks straight ahead and gives a small nod, "My wife isn't here, so it's only fair you run with me,"

Wei WuXian smiles but his strides are long with Lan Wangji behind him. Wei Ying cannot help but stare with shock as he watches the older version of himself sitting on the throne with practiced ease that makes tension ripple through the five in purple. Lan Wangji sits on Wei WuXian's right, the three of them perched at the center of the hall, Wei WuXian in the center.

Yu ZiYuan bristles and she can't stop her enraged blowup, "What is the meaning of this?! A-Cheng, that is the seat for the sect leader! Hanguang Jun may be chief cultivator so I would be inclined to reason there, but *him* ?!"

Jiang Wanyin glances at her calmly, "Mother, this is my sect at the moment, not yours,"

Yu ZiYuan's scowl falters. Wei Ying is openly gaping while Jiang Cheng stares at his older self with a million emotions. Jiang Fengmian inclines his head and then nods, "Yes, this Lotus Pier is your land, not ours. We are but guests,"

Jiang Wanyin smiles and bows his head, speaking before his Mother could start an argument, "Father has always been understanding,"

Jiang Fengmian smiles at his son. Jin Ling raises his hand and begins to speak, quickly moving forward to avoid a temper tantrum, "So, what are we gonna do now? We've done the big things and now it's more the personal stuff and exposing things,"

Lan JingYi nods, “Yes, yes! Who should we start with?”

Lan WangJi’s voice is steady, “Actually, Wanyin wants to touch something else,”

Grandmaster Lan looks curious, “Oh?”

Jiang Wanyin looks to Wei Ying, “My aunt and uncle, of course, Madam and Master Wei,”

For a moment there's a brief pause.

Then Yu ZiYuan, Jiang Fengmian, and Lan Qiren all repeat, “What?”

Wei Ying resists a flinch.

Wei WuXian turns towards the two he had *once* considered parental figures. He leans back and stares Yu ZiYuan dead in the eye, unflinching, “CangSe Sanren and Wei Changze, my parents. Shidi wants to dive into my life briefly before others. This starts with my parents,”

Another pause as they all think back to when Wei Ying had walked in, followed by the three at the top. At once, an assumption is formed of where this idea seemed to breed from and multiple pairs of eyes glance in Wei Ying’s direction (four Jiangs and one old Lan included)

Wei Ying doesn't flinch, but his body does stiffen. Wen Qing’s eyes catch it and she reaches over and grips his wrist to ground him. She nods and raises her voice, “Alright, let’s begin then,”

“Wait- shouldn’t we be doing important things?” Lan Qiren frowns, “Surely the information of two deceased souls can be looked at after all key things are taken care of,”

Grandmaster Lan glares, “No, this is important,”

He turns to Wei WuXian, “A-Xian, why don’t you start the array?”

Wei WuXian smiled and his hand glows red. He closes his eyes thinking of all his younger self would want to know. He thinks of memories he would like to enjoy. He thinks of his parents. He makes a grand gesture and the spiritual energy activates the array.

Instead of fading all to the back, most of the room stays the same though around them encircles with ink. Their chairs remain as does a faint color of the carpet in the hall. There is no time to ponder before the projection shows a young child around the age of 8.

Wei Ying inhales sharply.

He’s walking around the street alone, his robes slightly torn and covered in filth. There’s no clear indication of who the boy is yet, his eyes covered by his messy bangs. He sneaks by stalls, head down, and stays to the corners and sidelines of the streets. Eventually, the child reaches an alleyway and hides behind some boxes. He waits, looking over at a stall.

They watch curiously as the stall owner laughs with a client, and then moves around saying he has to go grab the item the client wants from the house behind him. The child watched the man leave and then quietly sneaked forward. He’s quick and agile as he jumps up and grabs a few things from the stall and rushes away before anyone can see him.

The child flutters through the crowd, easing into the alleyways. He ducks into one, checking around as he gets to the end, one hand on the wall of the building. He glanced around before squeezing his way behind the building to reveal a cluster of old crates and boxes.

The child doesn’t falter, let alone glance at them. Instead, he shuffles them around to make room for him to squeeze into. The child makes his way into the small area and the viewers are astonished to see markings of someone living here. No doubt..it is the child.

The child places down the items he stole, carefully. The group blinks upon realizing they're incense sticks. Before anyone can comment, the child brushes his hair from his eyes to reveal a familiar silver.

There's a collective amount of gasps and Wei Ying looks down. *They know* . They *all* know now. They know exactly *what* he is.

“Is that...Y-Ying-Ge?” Wen Ning mutters.

Nie Huaisang stared at his best friend, “How come you never told me you lived on the streets before Sect Leader Jiang found you!? I thought those were just rumors!”

Wei Ying clenches his fists and forces a tight smile, and speaks with a joking tone, “You never asked,”

Lan Zhan opens his mouth but closes it. He's sitting across from Wei Ying, he had seen the expression. He had understood Wei Ying *did not* want people to know much of his past. He wonders, minutely, if his thoughts from earlier would be confirmed.

Wei WuXian shuffles in the cramped space. He moves things aside and the group sees a small hall dug into the dirt, rocks, and pebbles surrounding it. Inside, is a small pit of ash. They watch as the 8-year-old child takes two sticks and begins to, skillfully, light a fire.

Lan Zhan mutters under his breath and only his brother catches the words, “survival skills...”

Lan Xichen's eyes widen and then soften with sympathy. He glanced at the head disciple. The Wei will not live an easy life- has not lived an easy life.

When the flame burns, Wei WuXian smiles and moves, grabbing the two incense sticks. He lights the ends with fire and sits in a tender kneel. He brings the sticks near his heart and closes his eyes muttering, “Mama, Baba. It’s A-Ying,”

He places the incense down in a small wooden holder, watching the smoke waft. He smiles sadly, “It’s been three years since Mama and Baba left A-Ying alone,”

Jiang Fengmian’s eyes snap to his ward and there’s a barely hidden hurt and shock, “A-Xian...you know...you know when they died?”

Wei Ying doesn’t turn his head, instead, his face flickers with an apologetic look. Jiang Yanli turns to her brother, speaking softly with an expression of both worry and sadness, “A-Xian you told us you didn’t know the exact date. It’s why you never mourned,”

Wei WuXian considers his options carefully. He had kept this information hidden for a very specific reason when he was younger, and that was simply distrust. And then later, seeing how his parents were welcomed, he didn’t want to cause more damage. He didn’t want to grant his parent’s spirits that. He breathes in softly before speaking up. He bows his head to his Uncle in apology, “I’m sorry, Uncle. I have wronged you,”

Wei Ying’s eyes snap up and his mouth blurts, “Why would you-“

He stops seeing the expressions of the Jiang’s, wide eyes staring at him with disbelief (his Uncle looks hurt). He wilts and turns his head away. The gap between him and Jiang Yanli grows as the gap between him and Wen Qing shortens. Jiang Wanyin notice’s and he can only find pained acceptance inside him.

Wei WuXian hums softly and then they watch as the child curls in on himself, forehead to the floor and kneeling to the incense, “Mama...Baba...A-Ying is sorry,” there’s a choked sob and it takes moment for them to realize that Wei WuXian does not sound *eight* .

Wen Qing’s heartaches and she closes the distance completely, giving her new brother a tight hug, whispering, “I know what’s it like to grow up too fast because of your situation,”

Wei Ying's eyes widened at the sudden hug and words. Then they soften, a smile on his lips. He leans into her, blind to the glances of Jiang Yanli and Jiang Cheng, "I think I know why I trusted you and A-Ning when I was in such a dark time,"

Wen Qing thinks she knows too.

He lifts his head and there are tears falling. Wei WuXian sobs again, "Mama, Baba, please forgive A-Ying. I- I- can't remember--"

He weeps a bit more, staring down, "it's fading- everything. It hurt- it hurt before to think- but now it's all gone! Mama, Baba, please come back, please come back to me..."

Wei WuXian wilts into a ball, "I don't want to forget...I don't want to lose you..."

Wen Qing hums softly and her voice is caught by all, "Sometimes, our minds push away things. At a young age caught between the sudden loss and homelessness and just surviving, thinking of your parents was a liability. So you must've pushed it away, eventually forgetting all of your memories,"

Wei Ying doesn't let the whimper escape, only pressing closer to Wen Qing. Wei WuXian's smile is brittle and he nods, "I'm sure that's likely,"

Jin ZiXuan and Nie Huaisang both exchange a worried glance as they see the way Wei Ying's teeth clenched in anger. Sharing a seat has made them grow closer and the things they see are slowly shaping them into realizing there are things going on...things that cause catastrophe in the future. Jin ZiXuan can't help but feel regret as he looks back on how he had always treated Wei WuXian(and Jiang Yanli), always glaring and flaunting himself like he has been taught.

The scene begins to fade and this time they're looking at an older Wei WuXian, already dressed in the robes he wore as the YiLing Patriarch. He's in a bright and plain white room, sitting down with a dazed look on his face.

“A-Ying,”

Two figures appear behind him, and Wei WuXian whips his head around, the call drawing out something forgotten. He stared at them for a moment, blank, before his eyes widened terribly and tears fell, “M-Mama? Baba?”

Wei ChangZe and CangSe Sanren smile, bending down. CangSe Sanren pulls her son close, kissing the crown of his head lovingly, “I’m sorry, my baby. My sweet baby, my sweet Ying-Er. I’m so sorry, I’m so proud of you,”

Wei Ying blinks, “What...I- I meet them?”

Wei WuXian’s expression is confused, but then understanding, “I believe this is just after I’ve died. I have no recollection but it seems I met them,”

“You don’t remember your own death?” Jin ZiXuan repeated carefully.

Wei WuXian shakes his head with an amused huff, “Nothing but peaceful emptiness and silence,”

If he sees the worsening concern, he says nothing.

Wei WuXian trembles and a defeated smile crawls on his face as the tears fall harder. He hugs her back weakly, “Please...please do not say things of such,”

“A-Ying,” Wei ChangZe whispered pained, his son and wife pulling back slightly to look at him. Wei ChangZe reaches forward to caress the thin cheek, “We are very proud of you, you’ve done so well,”

Wei WuXian sobs, “No, no, shut up. Don’t lie to me,”

Wei Ying nods to the words, frowning slightly at his parent’s words, but also greedily taking in how they looked and sounded, their behavior, their smile, even the shade of their eyes and robes.

Lan WangJi sees the movement and glances over to his past self. He hesitates, before a paper crane forms in his one hand and flies around the outer edge of the circle before landing in Lan Zhan’s lap. The younger second jade blinks surprised, looking at his brother, who shakes his head. Lan Zhan looks towards the older Lans, seeing his older self nod to him.

He carefully unfolds the message.

“We aren’t, oh, A-Ying...” CangSe Sanren’s voice trembled with pain, “I promise my son, I promise,”

Wei WuXian shook his head, but leaned into his father’s touch. CangSe Sanren exchanges a look of despair with her husband, shifting forward to brush her fingers through the black hair, “We know A-Ying, we know you’ve been hurt. We’re sorry for leaving,”

Wei WuXian shook his head again, “Its okay,” he laughed bitterly, “Its probably just my fate to suffer eternally. What a cruel disgusting lie happiness and love and other bright shit is!”

Wei WuXian winced, “Oh god...”

“You just killed yourself,” Lan WangJi reminded, though as he said the words, they came out like steel.

Wei WuXian caught the lingering anger and pain, interlacing his fingers with his husband’s while the reminder makes the atmosphere darken again.

Wei ChangZe hugged him softly, pressing his lips to his son's temple, "In our next life, all three of us can be happy together. No separating, no sects, no fake families, no greedy pigs, just us,"

Wei WuXian pauses, smiling softly at the thought before it fades. And suddenly, there's a small flash of regret, "Oh...oh Baba, baba, A-Ying is sorry, A-Ying won't be joining you,"

Everyone in the room freezes.

Wei Ying's eyes widen and he turns a glare to his older self, "What?! What other dumb thing did you do?!"

Wei WuXian doesn't answer, expression calculating. Whatever it is, he has a feeling his husband won't enjoy it and presses closer. He also reaches for Jiang Wanyin's hand, the younger taking it firmly.

The sound of something cracking echoes in the room. Wei ChangZe and CangSe Sanren freeze and suddenly, there's terror on their faces. Wei ChangZe pulls back and looks towards Wei WuXian's chest, right over his heart. There is a crack on his figure, a pale yellow light seeping through.

CangSe Sanren screams, "A-YING!!!"

Wei WuXian is hit with the reminder and his eyes widen, "...fuck,"

Everyone turns to him, demanding an explanation, the most prudent from his brother and husband. They do not require one as the Wei WuXian on the viewing answers for them.

“...I’m sorry, Mama, please don’t cry,” Wei WuXian weakly mutters and the cracks begin to spread.

CangSe Sanren is trying to stop the cracks, her silver eyes shining with tears. She held her child closer to her chest, “No, no! A-Ying, stop, stop it, please. Oh, please! I know you’re hurt, I know they hurt you...”

“I don’t want to live, Mama...” Wei WuXian whispers softly, curling around his mother and giving her a weak smile, one ridden with shame and defeat, “Not this life...not another. The world is cruel...I don’t want to be in it...ever again...”

Its a slap to everyone as the words process. There is only one way a soul cannot enter the reincarnation cycle right away....and that is due to it shattering.

Jiang Yanli sobs, hand flying to her mouth and Wen Qing holds Wei Ying tighter.

“A-Die!!!” Lan SiZhui screams in horror, drowning Lan WangJi’s and Jiang Wanyin’s whimper and choke, “You didn’t- you wouldn’t!”

“T-that doesn’t make sense!!” Lan JingYi paled, while Ouyang Zizhen and Jin Ling both grip each other tightly in terror, “How did you come back then?”

Wei WuXian shook his head slowly, the grip his brother and husband had on him beginning to hurt. He speaks carefully, “I...haven’t figured that out yet,”

The family of three are all crying as Wei WuXian’s soul begins to shatter more and more, the cracks increasing to such an amount its truly a wonder how Wei WuXian’s soul was even found by Mo XuanYu.

Wei ChangZe hugs them both tightly, all their heads leaning onto one another's. Wei ChangZe mutters softly, “...rest my son,”

The shattering sound snaps and a gold light explodes, the scene fading away and gentle music beginning to play.

Jin ZiXuan suddenly roars, “What sort of introduction is that?!”

Jiang Yanli agrees, turning to her second brother to where he was still curled in Wen Qing’s arms, “A-Xian, will you be alright?”

Wei Ying nods easily, not entirely bothered by watching his soul shatter. In fact, the sight of his older self - the *monster* he becomes - shattering into a bunch of pieces brings a sort of satisfaction. Wei Ying smiles slightly without knowing. Jiang Wanyin frowns from his seat, shaking his head and muttering to his brother, “Your past self hates you...”

“Oh, well that’s nice,” Wei WuXian mumbles, “I hate myself too- ow!”

Both Jiang Wanyin and Lan Wangji had hit him, the former on his arm and the latter with a flick to the forehead.

Wei WuXian glares at both of them before muttering a tired, “Sorry,”

The scene moves to show the inside of a home. It’s not a wealthy one, more casual and small. There’s a fire crackling at the fireplace and the sound of someone humming. The scene guides them over to see a female dressed in creamy inner robes and white outer ones. Her sword was a very pale teal color, and her eyes were silver, shimmering against her fair skin. Her black hair was held back by a fancy ribbon, with a few strings hung around the side of her hair. She had a white hood attached to her robes, but it was down and unworn for now. On her waist was a black and white pendant in the shape of a flower. This was the pendent all those like her possessed. It was the mark of the immortal master, Baoshan Sanren.

For a moment, Wei Ying’s eyebrows knit together. He has no memories, yet...why does this pendant look similar to him? Where has he seen it before?

“What flower is that?” Jiang Cheng asked aloud.

“An Azalea,” Wei WuXian, Lan Qiren, Grandmaster Lan, Jiang Fengmian, and Wen Qing informed at the same time.

“Azalea?” Lan Xichen repeated, “I feel like I’ve heard of it before...”

Wei WuXian explained, “The Azalea flower blooms in Spring and can be red, cream, pink, or white. They represent happiness and prosperity, yet the flower is poisonous,” Wei WuXian then adds, “Most people know it because of its medical advantages,”

“How do you know it?” Nie Huaisang looked curious.

Wei WuXian hesitated before his hand grips at three pendants attached to his waist belt, “...In my time, I’m in possession of my mother’s pendant and my mother and father’s swords,”

And suddenly, Wei Ying knows where he saw it before. Of the three pendants, one is a purple tassel accompanied by the Jiang Sect silver bell, the second is a Lan Sect jade pendant. The final is the same pendent on the screen, the Azalea flower. Wei Ying felt like he had just fallen into the Waterborne abyss again. He sat up and snapped loud enough to cause a few people to startle, “WHAT?!”

“How is that possible?” Jiang Fengmian looked at Jiang Wanyin confused, though he - along with many others - had also caught sight of the pendent.

Jiang Wanyin held up his hands in surrender before pointing to Lan WangJi, “Due to the Lan elders not helping Shixiong plan the wedding or spending many funds on it, WangJi took it upon himself to get Shixiong a gift. He worked with me, A-Ling, and Huaisang to locate where Shixiong’s parents had passed away if we could. It took four months of asking spirits and searching before we found the burial site, we were lucky, to be honest. But this grave had been sealed with talisman so I took the remains and gave them a proper burial while all their belongings that hadn’t faded into the Earth was returned to Shixiong,”

Wei WuXian smiled at Lan WangJi, “It was really the best thing,”

Wei Ying gaped openly, before flushing red as Jiang Yanli stood up and bowed to Lan Zhan, “Second Young Master Lan, thank you for taking such good care of A-Xian,”

Lan Zhan seemed alarmed, “I have not done anything,”

“That may be, but I know you will take good care of A-Xian,” Jiang Yanli smiled.

Lan Zhan only seemed to panic more and looked towards his older self, the note from earlier still on his mind.

“Mama!!!” A little boy ran in, CangSe Sanren turning around as the little Wei Ying ran to her with a terrified yell. The call made them all pay attention again, watching as CangSe Sanren whipped around and quickly moved forward, lifting her son into her arms, “A-Ying, are you alright?”

Wei Ying whimpered, hugging his mother tightly, “Sc-scary dream...”

CangSe Sanren’s eyes softened and she walked out of the kitchen and towards the fireplace. She sat down in a chair in front of it, rubbing her son’s back tenderly, “Its okay, Mama’s here, Mama’s here,”

“I remember tears streaming down your face,”

There was a moment of confusion as the *female* voice sung aloud. Then, like a slap, everyone realized who it was. Wei Ying’s mouth became dry as he yelled out, “Mama!”

Jiang Yanli smiled softly, “Madam Wei has such a lovely voice,”

Jiang Cheng nodded and then looked at his brother, “At least we know where your musical talents are inherited from,”

Wei Ying giggled softly, but it faded as he caught the dark look on Yu ZiYuan’s face as she heard *her* children compliment *his* Mother.

Wei Ying whimpered and curled closer, gripping the white robes. CangSe Sanren walked to the fireplace and sat herself in one of the chair’s in front of it, embracing her only son with tender care. Her eyes strayed to a door, before back to her son. She whispered softly, “Don’t worry sweetheart, Baba’s gonna be back soon,”

Wei Ying sniffled, “Where is he?”

CangSe Sanren ran her fingers through her son’s hair, “Just getting some things we need,”

She then tapped Wei Ying’s nose lightly, “Our Ying-Er has to have lots of food to grow nice and big!”

Wei Ying giggled a little at the notion, the earlier fear draining away. He sat comfortably and nodded, “Like Mama and Baba! Big and strong! And brave! And pretty!”

“When I said ‘I’ll never let you go’”

Wei Ying could feel warmth beginning to spread through him as the face and sound of his mother’s voice became his once more. He smiled as Ouyang Zizhen cooed, “Senior Wei! You’re so adorable as a child!”

Wei WuXian smiled, before he and his past counterpart turned pink at Lan WangJi's words, "Mn, Wei Ying is always adorable,"

"LAN ZHAN!"

The scene progressed slightly and Wei Ying was seated on the rug in front of the fire, playing with a couple of small wooden animals. CangSe Sanren watched from the kitchen, smiling lovingly as she cooked. Her movements paused at one moment and she quickly placed the items down and strode silently to the door. Her face twisted a bit and she gripped the hilt of her sword.

The smiles vanished at once, worry and confusion replacing them.

Jiang Fengmian's eyebrows knitted together. He asked Lan Qiren, "Have you ever seen CangSe like that?"

Lan Qiren shook his head, "Never,"

Yu ZiYuan's jaw clenched and she looked down, desperately trying to control herself. Her face was twisted into a complex gaze of negative emotions. Madam Jin glanced towards her friend with a soft sigh.

A knock hit the door, then silence. Then, two more knocks and a soft call, "My love?"

CangSe Sanren's stance changed into a more relaxed one. At the sound of his father, Wei Ying sat up with an open mouth ready to call out, but he paused when his mother held up a hand that glowed white from spiritual energy. It was brief, but it was a signal. A signal Wei Ying had long since learned. Wei Ying pouted, but stayed silent watching as his mother approached the door.

"When all those shadows almost killed your light,"

The lyrics make the frowns deeper and a foreboding feeling begins to fly around the room.

Wei Ying's fingers twitch and then he grimaces as a dull pain in his forehead begins to hum. Reaching up, he gives a soft rub, listening as Nie Huaisang thought aloud, "Are they expecting someone unfriendly?"

"Unfriendly?" Jin ZiXuan repeated and then frowned, "I thought Madam Wei and Master Wei passed on a nighthunt?"

Wei Ying nearly let out a strangled noise of despair as dread began to fill him. He snapped his eyes to Jin ZiXuan, "...they did...they did..." he pauses and he looks to his uncle, "...that's what you told me,"

Jiang Fengmian said nothing. Yu ZiYuan glances at her nephew her husband's ward.

She gripped the door and called out, "Flower?"

Wei ChangZe's response is not immediate. It's a pause and then, "Azalea. The flower of your mother,"

CangSe Sanren exhales and she opens the door, smiling as Wei ChangZe's face is revealed to her and the viewers. Wei ChangZe is quick to step inside, the door closing right behind him and the metal latches flying shut.

Wei Ying breathes in, drinking in the full and proper visual of his father.

Wei ChangZe was dressed in purple inner robes and black outer robes. At his waist hung a familiar silver bell, the mark of his life in the Jiang Sect. A sword was strapped to his waist, the sheathe was a sleek red and the hilt was gold. On the hilt, a deep red tassel hung off the end. Most of his hair flowed down, while the rest of his hair was held

up in a tight bun with a black ribbon. He had very light tanned skin, with deep brown eyes and a handsome facial structure and build.

Jiang Fengmian exhaled deeply at the sight of the man he called his brother. He spoke softly, "A-Ze..."

"Baba!" Wei Ying exclaims running forward and throwing himself to hug his father's leg.

Wei Changze looks down with a laugh. He hands the basket in his hands to CangSe Sanren, who smiles delightfully as Wei ChangZe bends down and lifts up Wei Ying, who happily squeals. Wei ChangZe speaks, "Hello my handsome son,"

Wei Ying happily grins and responds, "Hello Baba!"

"I remember you said,"

Wei Ying feels himself grin as well.

Jiang Cheng blinks at the scene, before turning to glance at his father. He then turns towards his brother, eyes widening a bit at the expression. Wei Ying looks like he did when he first came, innocent and curious of everything. There's a light in his eyes...a light Jiang Cheng has never seen before.

CangSe Sanren's voice teases, "And what of me? A husband can't greet his wife properly, now, is that it?"

Wei ChangZe sighs fondly, adjusting his grip to prop Wei Ying on his hip. He then turns to his wife and gives her a small kiss on the cheek, "Hello to my beautiful and wonderful wife,"

Madam Jin and Yu ZiYuan both feel their hearts and stomachs twist. They both look at the family...the happy, loving family. The family they could never have. Madam Jin does not mind, she does not care for her husband, and he doesn't pretend he cares about her either. But she cares for her son, and she wishes he had a father such as the one Wei ChangZe was.

Yu ZiYuan only feels rage and spite. This is what she wants and can't have. Happiness and love. A husband's love. A love *that woman* took away from her. A love her son was losing because of *that woman's son* .

The scene progresses more and they watch as a sleeping Wei Ying is cradled in CangSe Sanren's arms. They're no longer in the living room, instead, they're in the bedroom. CangSe Sanren is leaning back, while Wei ChangZe is moving around the room and preparing for bed.

CangSe Sanren speaks up tenderly, "You didn't tell me an update,"

Her husband's movement's pause. The scene shifts to show Wei ChangZe's solemn expression.

Grandmaster Lan can't help but comment, "He looks like you Fengmian,"

Jiang Fengmian, to the surprise of his two children and nephew, laughs. He shakes his head, "I learned that expression from him! Ze-Xiong is the only reason I'm half of the person I am, today!"

"What do you mean?" Jiang Cheng's mouth blurts before he can stop it.

He regrets it almost at once, but his father turns to him, eyes lifted in a pleasant smile. Jiang Fengmian informs, "Without my sworn brother, I wouldn't have learned anything. He helped me when being an heir got too much,"

Jiang Wanyin and Jiang Cheng can both feel a current of shock strike them, however, only the older one's shock is accompanied by understanding.

“Don’t leave me here alone,”

“A-Se-”

“Do we have to leave?” CangSe Sanren cuts him off, her eyes never lifting up from her son.

“...leave?” Lan Xichen repeats.

Wen Qing glances at Wei Ying, noticing him rub his head again, “A-Ying?”

“Its nothing,” Wei Ying answers.

“Senior Wei, do you know what’s going on?” Lan Jingyi asks.

The people of the past had practically forgotten Wei WuXian was even here with how uncharastically silent he was. Even his past self was bouncing and making reactions. Wei WuXian was so silent.

Wei WuXian shakes his head, “No,”

“Not right away,” Wei ChangZe answers finally, turning around. His hair is fully open and his cultivation robes have been switched. He walks around the bed and sits beside his wife, “Come up, let me undo your hair,”

CangSe Sanren does little to object, moving as told. As Wei ChangZe undoes her hair for bed, she whispers, “A-Ying can’t be up like this. He’s a child, this is unhealthy,”

“You grew up on a secluded mountain with an immortal as your mother,”

“But it was stable,” CangSe Sanren counters, her face pinching a bit at the mention of home. She mutters, “...should we head back?”

Wei Ying’s mouth falls open.

Nie MingJue exclaims their shock, “What?! I thought it was against the rules?!”

It seemed Wei ChangZe had similar thoughts.

“Can we?” he undoes her hair, brushing it carefully and leaning forward to lean against her, “Can you?”

“Mother...mother will understand, but we’d never be able to leave should we be able to stay,” CangSe Sanren sighed. She then motioned to their son, “Even so, mother would only agree for A-Ying, not for you and me,”

Wei ChangZe eyes her for a few seconds, “CangSe,” the sound of her full name makes her silver eyes fully look up. Wei ChangZe asks softly, “Wherever you want, wherever you feel safest...we will go,”

CangSe Sanren shakes her head. She then asks, “What about ZiYuan-Mei and Fengmian...do you think...do you think they could keep A-Ying safe until this is all over?”

At the sound of their names, the two Jiang leader’s frown. What could the situation possibly be for *them* to come into conversation?

Yu ZiYuan's focus is also on the form of addressment. The only intimacy shared was between Wei ChangZe and Jiang Fengmian. And...

“ZIYUAN-MEI?!” Multiple people exclaim, Wei Ying and Wei WuXian being the loudest.

Wei WuXian looks at Yu ZiYuan and she meets it. Her mouth feels dry and she feels a burdening weight inside her at that look. It's full of questions...and pain. She can see it so clearly. So fucking clearly.

“A-Niang...” Jiang Wanyin speaks slowly, “Did you...did you know Aunt Wei?”

Yu ZiYuan's expression tightens. Jiang Fengmian sighs and then says, “There was a group. We all met in Cloud Recesses, much like all of you. Ruohan, Guangshan, **YongZhen** , **HuiLang**, Qiren , myself, A-Ze, **PeiZhi** , Ziyuan, **ShuFang** and CangSe,”

Nie MingJue and Nie Huaisang piped up at the sound of their father's name, while the Twin Jades froze at the mention of their parents' names.

The children were in utter disbelief. Wei WuXian was the one who broke first, looking at Yu ZiYuan, “If you were friends with my mother, how could you hate her?!”

Yu ZiYuan gritted her teeth and opened her mouth to spit, but nothing came out. She scoffed and reverted to anger, “I wasn't close to her. You think I would be? Of course not! She was closer to Shufang before the Lan's accused Shufang of murder and HuiLang decided to marry her,”

“WHAT?!” another exclamation erupted as eyes snapped to every Lan in the room and the Twin Jade's stiffened, lowering their eyes. Lan WangJi did not have the energy to deal with this right now and he ordered, “Shouldn't we be focusing?”

“But all that's dead...”

The sudden note made them all snap back into attention and eyes turn to the screen.

The word ‘dead’ swirls around Wei Ying’s brain, unaware of the feelings of adults. Briefly, a blurry image burns in his mind. He doesn’t know what it is...but he sees red and the colors of his parent’s robes. The image is gone in a second and Wei Ying’s fingers curl tightly.

Wei ChangZe looks uncertain, “I do not wish to bother A-Mian or ZiYuan. He has two children,” he smiles slightly, “A-Mian was gushing about his son just in his last letter,”

Jiang Cheng’s eyes widen, “What?”

Wei Ying and Wei WuXian both smile knowingly. Wei WuXian glances at his brother to see a smile dancing on his lips. He then looks at Yu ZiYuan who seems caught off guard. Jiang Fengmian, embarrassed, coughs awkwardly. The others, respectfully, do not comment on the interaction, but many smile.

CangSe Sanren giggles slightly, rolling her eyes, “Yes, Fengmian is truly your brother,”

Wei ChangZe chuckles softly, before raising a hand forward and stroking Wei Ying’s hair. The smile fades and he says, “A-Ying is used to moving...when he is older, he will understand why,”

“...and gone...”

But Wei Ying doesn’t. He doesn’t understand anything.

A voice in his head curls, *‘Because being older never came’*

Nie MingJue speaks carefully, “Am I the only one that has a very ominous feeling?”

He gets a plethora of headshakes.

“Older?” CangSe Sanren repeats, almost scared, “Will I survive till then?”

Wei Ying stills.

Lan Qiren voices out his horror, “What?”

Grandmaster Lan frowns and he shares a worried look with Lan WangJi, the two checking on Wei WuXian, who is watching with minimal reactions.

Wei ChangZe’s gaze hardens, “CangSe Sanren,” she snaps her eyes up to him, “Don’t you ever speak that way,”

CangSe Sanren just sighs and nods.

“...and passed tonight,”

“Huaisang,” Jin ZiXuan leans close to his seat buddy, voice low, “I don’t think this viewing is going to be as warm as Sandu Shengshou wishes it to,”

Nie Huaisang finds himself agreeing, the two heirs turning to stare at Wei Ying and Wei WuXian.

The scene fades away into a newday, this time, the family are on the move. Wei Ying is seated on his mother’s lap, while she sits on a donkey. Wei ChangZe is holding the reins and walking in front of them, listening to the two babble away.

The music is slightly more friendly and CangSe Sanren's voice is a beautiful harmony with the scene, "*Just close your eyes,*"

Lan WangJi sucks in a breath, before smiling, "You remember this scene,"

Wei WuXian nods with a small smile, while Wei Ying answers verbally with a wide smile, "Yes! It's the only piece I remember!"

The contrast between the two versions make multiple people frown in worry.

"Where are we going now?" Wei Ying asks with a golden smile.

"Where does Ying-Er want to go?" CangSe Sanren asks with her own smile.

Wei Ying gasps and pouts up at his mother, "No! No! Not Ying-Er- WuXian!"

Wei Ying blinks softly before speaking carefully, "...most males don't get their courtesy name this early...I got mine at five or younger,"

Whatever pessimistic thing Wei Ying was thinking, Grandmaster Lan jumped to put it to rest, "Some people get their common and birth names at birth,"

Jiang Fengmian added after receiving a look from the grandmaster and Jiang Wanyin, "A-Ze never knew his true birth name, instead using Ze from his courtesy name. Females don't have two names, so common names were a normal thing for your parents. I highly doubt they thought much before bestowing you with both at such an age,"

"I got mine when I got my blade," Nie Huaisang blinked.

Jiang Fengmian smiled, “You’re an heir, of course in our sects, tradition and formal ceremonies are important,”

Wei ChangZe rolled his eyes, “A-Ying, WuXian is your common name. Other people who aren’t close to you or aren’t your family call you that. We’re your mama and baba, of course we’d use Ying,” he turned back and raised an eyebrow, “Unless A-Ying has grown tired of us?”

Wei Ying gasps again, this time even louder. His expression turns heartbroken and he exclaims, “No! No!” He turns around and grabs CangSe Sanren, “No! Mama and Baba aren’t allowed to leave A-Ying! Ever!”

Seeing the display, the two stop and quickly huddle their son, comforting him.

“Of course not, darling, we’ll never leave,” CangSe Sanren promises.

Wei ChangZe looks apologetic, “Baba is sorry, Ying-er, I didn’t mean it like that,”

Wei Ying puffs his chest out, “Mhm! Baba and Mama have to stick with A-Ying forever!”

The two repeat softly, “Forever,”

“The sun is going down,”

It should be cute. It should be warm.

But all the scene causes is a solemn shadow and Wei Ying’s heart to clench. He grits his teeth and speaks in his mind, *‘Liars. You left...you left me alone,’*

The scene moves forward and the family are seen entering a town. It's rustling with activity. The three tie their donkey in the town stables and pay the caretaker, Wei ChangZe taking their supplies and Wei Ying carried in CangSe Sanren's arms. They walk around, looking for a place to eat and then a temporary home they could settle in.

“What town-”

“YiLing,” Wei WuXian answers before Lan Xichen even finishes his sentence.

The quick answer makes everyone do a double take.

Wen Ning asks, “H-how do y-you know?”

Wei WuXian responds calmly, “YiLing is my territory, of course I'd know it,”

Jiang Wanyin rolls his eyes, “Your territory? You mean your home. You practically protect that entire land by yourself!”

Lan SiZhui giggles, “A-Die *is* the YiLing Patriarch!”

Wei WuXian smirks and nudges his brother, “Yes, my son knows what he's talking about. Plus, the Jiang Sect never wanted it, neither did anyone else. The Burial Mounds are my manor afterall,”

“What do you mean?” Wei Ying snaps, “Didn't you get thrown in there?”

Wei WuXian's smile fades and he turns to his younger self, giving a stiffer smile. No one in the room misses the tension between the two Wei's, “Yes. But later, I took the Dafan Wens there. I built my family there, I died there, I was reborn there,” his smile turns darker for a

moment and a blush of red seeps into the silver, “The Burial Mounds are my playground and every being in those mountains are my companions. In my time, the mountain listens to me. In my time, YiLing is under my personal protection,”

Wei Ying hates him.

Jin Ling adds, “Daijiu basically runs a sect just without true disciples,”

“He doesn’t need to find disciples,” Lan JingYi responds before anyone can process, “Senior Wei has us and the jiang and lan disciples!”

“A sect?” Jiang Cheng frowns, “What about the Jiang Sect? Why aren't you helping me there when you're so close by?”

Wei WuXian’s eyebrow raised, “It's no sect. It's my expertise,” he then tilted his head and challenged, “plus what does it matter to you right now? You're not my brother,”

It hurts. Jiang Cheng does a full body flinch and his eyes widen with hurt. Jiang Yanli also gasps, caught off guard. She reaches over to hold Jiang Cheng’s hand tightly, staring at Wei WuXian with confusion and hurt. She doesn’t get to say anything because Jiang Wanyin grimaces slightly before whining, “Shixiong...”

“ *You're* my brother,” Wei WuXian smiles at the man beside him. He glanced back at Jiang Cheng, “ *he* is not,”

The scene moves forward and they watch the family of three enter a small house on the outskirts of town. Its a little isolated, with a path leading to and from the town and house. Wei Ying is sitting on Wei ChangZe’s shoulder, giggles echoing in the space as the man runs and makes ‘whooshing’ sounds with his mouth. CangSe Sanren is smiling lovingly and rolls her eyes as she stands at the open door, “Alright my darlings, lets come inside now,”

“You’ll be alright,”

The two boys laugh and listen to the sanren. Wei ChangZe lifts Wei Ying off his shoulders and settles for carrying him, leaning over and kissing CangSe Sanren’s cheek after shutting the door. CangSe Sanren smiles, but then giggles as Wei Ying withers to have his mother hold him and places his own kiss on her other cheek. He declares, “A-Ying can give kisses too!”

CangSe Sanren pinched his cheeks, “Yes, yes, my A-Ying gives the best kisses!”

Wei Ying’s heart is warm and his eyes are shimmering with adoration. Distantly, he feels the foreboding sense of tears and takes a deep breath, pushing it away. He can’t rid the smile though.

‘Why would he forget all this? How could he forget this?’

Nie Huaisang gushes, “Wei-Xiong! You’re so adorable! And your parents seem like amazing people!”

Wei Ying smiles brighter, “Thank you...” he then adds, “Yes, they were the best,”

The scene faded with the laughter to show Wei Ying walking beside CangSe Sanren as they bustled through the market looking for things. Wei Ying is holding his mother’s sleeve, but his curious gaze is traveling around. His eyes suddenly widen and he releases his mother, who is currently arguing with the owner of the stall.

They watch as the young child ends up at a stall with toys, gazing at it with interest.

Wei Ying suddenly grunts, surprising everyone slightly. Lan JingYi asks, “Young Master Wei? Are you alright?”

“Yes, I’m fine,” Wei Ying smiled while rubbing his temple softly.

He glances at the screen, smile faltering slightly, “I just...um...have a bad feeling,”

“Do you want one?”

Wei Ying glances up at the voice to see an old man smiling at him.

At once, everyone in the room stiffens.

Lan WangJi’s face darkens considerably, “How dare...”

“Baobei, I’m fine,” Wei WuXian assures them all, pointing to Wei Ying, “I’m alive and well, sadl-”

He cuts himself off by the furious glares multiple people send him. He wilts and corrects himself, “I’m alive and well, happily,”

“Better,” Jiang Wanyin huffs before glaring at his younger self, “You better pay attention to how to call out his stupid lies,”

“Please do not,” Wei WuXian pipes up, “It’s going to be such a hassle to learn again,”

He receives a punch on the arm from his brother.

Wei Ying smiles and nods, “Yes! I’m going to ask Mama,”

“I can just buy you one now,” The man smiles but his eyes are unfriendly.

Wei Ying shakes his head, “No thank you. Mama says to ask her for anything and if we can get it, she gets it!”

“Oh? Do you not have a lot of money to spare?” The man crouches down in front of Wei Ying now.

Wei Ying blinked confused, “Huh...”

Wei Ying shook his head. His face then soured slightly as his older version vocalized his thoughts, “To think there was a time I didn’t understand the preciousness of having money. Huh, what a spoiled brat I must’ve been,” he glanced at his husband, “Maybe time in those streets helped me more than I thought it would,”

Lan Wangji resisted the urge to sigh. Sometimes he really wanted to take his husband and just take him to a place where they didn’t have to worry about anything and just *live* .

The man grabbed Wei Ying’s wrist and began to pull the boy to the other side of the stall, “Look at these, do you want som-”

Wei Ying seemed to realize something felt off because he frowned and tried to pull his wrist away, “No, no! I don’t want!”

“How about some sweets?” The man lured.

Wei Ying did want, but he also wanted his mother. He didn’t answer, stuck.

The man seemed to smile and dragged Wei Ying to where he claimed a candy stall was. He didn’t get very far before they ran into Wei Changze and a very panicked Cangse

Sanren. The moment they saw the scene, CangSe Sanren screamed with relief, rushing forward, “A-YING!”

“MAMA!” Wei Ying screamed and the man abruptly released the boy’s wrist as CangSe Sanren hugged Wei Ying tightly.

‘No one can hurt you now,’

Wei WuXian and Wei Ying snorted at the lyrics, causing a couple grimaces.

“No one will hurt you,” Wen Qing glared at Wei Ying, “We’re learning this stuff to stop it. That means we’re gonna keep you alive and hopefully on the swords path,”

Wei ChangZe on the other hand was furious. He grabbed the older man, who was backing away from the scene, by the collar. His voice was low with rage, “What were you doing with my son?”

“H-helping him!”

Multiple scoffs echoed.

“Fucking pervert,” Jin Ling growled.

Jiang Yanli looked at Wei Ying, “A-Xian, if you were on the streets for years...then...”

“Then what?” Wei Ying asked slowly. ~~His siblings~~ Jiang Yanli and Jiang Cheng didn’t really ask about his time before Lotus Pier. And Wei Ying never mentioned it.

Wei WuXian seemed to understand the question and answered, “If my life on the streets is exploited, then you’ll see. If its not, what does it matter to anyone here? Do you want more material to insult me with?”

Jiang Yanli flinched, “What? No! I- A-Xian!”

Wei Ying snapped, “Why are you being so mean to Jiang Cheng and Shijie!?”

Wei WuXian finally got it out, “Because no matter how much I wish it to be, this *Maiden Jiang* is not my shijie. My shijie is dead. She died in my shidi’s arms with a sword meant for me. And your *Young Master Jiang*, how is he my martial brother? How could he be? My martial brother is beside me,”

If the three jiang siblings of the past are staring in shock, then neither of the future Prides acknowledge it.

‘Come morning light,’

Wei ChangZe looks ready to murder the man, but CangSe Sanren stands up, her son in her arms. She rushes forward, “A-Ze, A-Ze, lets not draw attention to ourselves. Not here,”

They watch as Wei ChangZe’s anger falters and he just grunts, shoving the man away roughly, before placing a hand on his wife’s back as they walk away. As they get farther away, Wei ChangZe says, “Ying-Er,”

“Yes Baba?”

“Are you alright?”

Wei Ying nods, but then frowns and shakes his head. He holds up his hand where a light bruise has formed around his wrist, “Hurt,”

Wei ChangZe grips the hilt of his sword tightly and CangSe Sanren’s face tightens.

The scene shifts to Wei Ying sitting down and practicing some calligraphy or drawing as his parents are in the kitchen, cooking.

“If it wouldn’t draw attention, I’d kill the man myself,” Wei ChangZe grumbles.

“Just toss the body in those damned mountains. No one will even know,” CangSe Sanren humors.

Wei ChangZe freezes as if actually considering it. CangSe Sanren glances at him and laughs slightly, nudging her husband, “If our life wasn’t the way it is now, I would let you...”

“I know,” Wei ChangZe smiles at her, “We have to be ready to leave at any moment,”

‘You and I’ll be safe and sound,’

“Leave?” Wen Ning whispers.

Yu ZiYuan grips her chair tighter, turning to her husband, “Do you know what they’re meaning?”

Jiang Fengmian shakes his head, “No...it worries me a bit. A-Ze isn’t one to keep-” he stops before laughing lowly, “My mistake, A-Ze is exactly the type to keep things to himself even if it hurts,”

Grandmaster Lan smiles painfully, “A-Xian is very similar to ChangZe. Sometimes It seems he’s more like ChangZe than CangSe,”

Lan Qiren scoffs, “Really? He seems more like CangSe,”

Madam Jin agreed, “From what I’ve heard and seen, there’s no doubt he’s CangSe’s child,”

Wei Ying shifts awkwardly and Nie MingJue clears his throat loudly, while Ouyang Zizhen says, “Yes, just gossip about him as if he isn’t here,”

The music continued to play, it was a gentle and light tune, but from the heavy emotion CangSe Sanren was singing with, the music seemed to have another layer. A layer of somberness and love. Of a promise in the worst situation.

The scene faded away and when it appeared again, Wei Ying seemed older. Not by much, but by a little. He was sitting at a table, messily writing on the table and saying the words out loud as his father was sitting beside him, pride on his face.

The pride fell as the door suddenly burst open. Wei ChangZe scooped up Wei Ying and his sword was unsheathed, pointed at the door with protectiveness.

Wei Ying’s head hurt again, this time, he heard the sounds of clashing and laughter of voices he’s never heard of. He also sees flashes of nature blurring past.

Wei Ying gasps when it fades away, holding his head tightly.

“Young Master Wei? What’s wrong?” Jin ZiXuan called out, eyeing the younger.

“Nothing, nothing...” Wei Ying repeated. But then he glanced up, “I think...I think I’m getting my memories back,”

“You don’t sound very happy...” Jiang Cheng frowned.

“Because the images in my head don’t feel very happy,” Wei Ying confessed and the scene in front of them seemed even darker.

‘Don’t you dare look out your window,’ A male voice sung this time.

Wei Ying’s straightened up and beamed, “Baba!”

Jiang Fengmian smiles, “A-Ze...”

Lan JingYi was in disbelief, “Is the entire Wei Family just really talented?! I mean, Senior Wei is awesome, so are his parents. And then we have SiZhui who is literally referred to as a mini Hanguang Jun!”

Laughter echoed, while the two Wei’s and Lan Sizhui blushed from the compliments. Lan Wangji pecked his husband’s cheek, humming agreement, “Very talented...”

“A-Ze!”

The sword is put down and Wei ChangZe sets the surprised Wei Ying down and runs forward. He kicks the door shut behind her, latches flying to lock it as he bends down near his wife, “A-Se! A-Se, are you alright?”

CangSe Sanren lifts her head where a small streak of blood is trickling down the side. She looks alarmed and frustrated. Wei Ying is standing away, watching with a worried gaze. Seeing the blood, his eyes widened, “Mama!”

Wei ChangZe orders, “A-Ying go get the medicine. Do you remember where it is?”

“Yes!” Wei Ying runs down a hallway that presumably leads to the bedrooms. Wei ChangZe moves his wife’s hair, asking, “What happened? Who did this?”

“Gone. They just caught me off guard when I walking back,” CangSe Sanren explained, “I killed them, I had to,”

Wei ChangZe opens his mouth to ask, but pauses when Wei Ying returns with the materials. He stands there, watching his father take the things and begin to clean the wound. His mother is tired and she has terrible guilt and anger on her face. Wei Ying finally asks, “...was it the bad men? Did they find you Mama?”

And Wei Ying can feel his heart stop.

Because that’s all the confirmation any of them need.

The Wei family were running and hiding. Which means the *night-hunt* they died on, was far from a night hunt. Wei Ying stands up, turning to his uncle with an expression of restrained anger and fear, “You said....you said they died on a night-hunt....”

Jiang Fengmian stares at the screen, before turning to his nephew, “A-Xian...”

Wei Ying can feel a small part of him break as he repeats, louder, this time in anger, “A NIGHT HUNT!!! How could they have?! My parents were STRONG!! My mother was a disciple of Baoshan Sanren!!! How could they have- How could they have...” he shakes his head and whispers in utter shame, “Why did I believe you...” his voice raises again, “Why did I believe you when you said that?!”

Everyone in the room is so quiet...and so startled. Because this is not the Wei Ying they (the people of the past) all know. Wen Qing stands up slowly and places a hand on Wei Ying’s shoulder, pulling him into her firmly, “A-Ying, we’ll help you. We know now, this will show us who was after your family...you protected my family in the future, I will help you find the people you hurt yours,”

And Wei Ying wilts, falling into and letting her pull him down to sit. Wei WuXian just laughs in disbelief, grabbing attention. He whispers, “The cultivation world...the fucking cultivation world...” he laughs again, pained this time, “You took every one of my families,”

The nobels all flinch.

Lan WangJi hugs his husband, “Airen,”

“No, no,” Wei WuXian whispers, curling into him, “Please, don’t say anything. Let’s just... let’s just watch my life fall apart,”

Lan WangJi’s grip tightens.

‘Darling, everything’s on fire,’

Wei ChangZe and CangSe Sanren freeze, snapping their eyes to their son. CangSe Sanren pushes her husband hand out of the way and moves to Wei Ying, holding him by the hands, tenderly, “A-Ying...where did you learn this?”

“I...I couldn’t sleep,” Wei Ying admitted, looking sorry, “Heard you and Baba talking about bad men chasing us. Said its why we kept moving,”

He shuffles awkwardly, before muttering sadly, “Do we have to leave YiLing?”

Wei ChangZe, hearing the tone, asks, “Do you like it here?”

Wei Ying lifts his head. He looks at the wound on his mother and shakes his head. CangSe Sanren smiles, poking her son’s nose, “Silly boy. Tell your parents the truth,”

Wei Ying smiles shyly, giggling at the touch, “A-Ying likes it here...” he says, “But...the bad men...”

His parents don’t get to reassure him when there's a loud boom outside. And Wei ChangZe and CangSe Sanren go pale.

‘The war outside our door keeps raging on,’

And Wei Ying knows, he knows. He knows this is the day. The day his parents *die* .

He straightens up, pulling himself together. He’ll apologize for his outburst later, it was unfitting of someone like him. Especially in front of those he is in the presence of.

Lan Qiren grits his teeth, “But who...why...”

Yu ZiYuan grips her robes tightly. She looks at her husband, who is right beside her. She whispers, voice low for only him to hear, “...fengmian,”

He turns to her, alerted by the whisper and the struggle in her tone. And when he sees her expression, he knows. He knows that his wife knows something of this day. He stares at her, unable to speak for a few moments. Then, he asks, “ZiYuan...”

“I...” she stops, because she cannot continue.

And then she hears him ask her, tone scared for a moment, “Did you...”

“No!” She exclaims, because his accusation *hurts* more than the fear of the revelation that was soon to come.

“A-Niang? A-Die?” Jiang Yanli calls.

The two say nothing and turn away.

Wei WuXian’s eyes narrow.

CangSe Sanren picks up Wei Ying, sword in her other hand as she and her husband run. They run around the house, picking up things and throwing other things in the burning fire.

As they do so, everyone can hear the echoes of a barrier being attacked over the music. It’s a light thing, but its there. Wei ChangZe asks, “Got everything?”

“Yes, the forest!” CangSe Sanren says and the two get to the back of the house at the same time as a boom and crash sounds along with the front door being kicked open.

Wei Ying grips his mother tighter, hiding his face in her shoulder as his parents run out the back door. They run towards the forest behind their house. The scene switches over back to the house to see a group of black robed and black masked cultivators rush out the house. One of them yells out and a group of ten or so cultivators chase after into the forest.

‘Hold on to this lullaby’

Faces darken at once.

Jin PeiZhi shakes her head, “What would they even do to render this attention?”

“CangSe gets everyone’s attention. You think she hasn’t offended someone of importance? She probably pissed off a god or something!” Yu ZiYuan seethes, ignoring the storm in her head and how heavy her sword seems at her side.

Wei Ying grits his teeth and feels hatred curling around his heart. Jiang Wanyin and Lan Wangji both look at Yu ZiYuan, glaring, “A-Niang!” “Madam Yu!”

She falters and turns away.

The Wei family is running through the trees, they’ve run quite the distance but they can’t run forever. Especially not with Wei Ying. CangSe Sanren yelps as talisman is thrown in front of her and she jumps to the side to avoid the blast. Wei ChangZe stops, turning around and bringing his wife close as they glance around. He looks up and yells, “Move!”

He shoves them and CangSe Sanren brings Wei Ying close, who yells in fear as they tumble in the dirt, avoiding the blast. The group is quick to rise to their feet, CangSe Sanren whispering, “A-Ying, are you okay?”

‘Even when the music’s gone,’

Wei Ying is shaking and there’s obvious fear in his face but he nods, “Yes,”

A cultivator bursts from the trees, sword swinging. Wei ChangZe meets them with his sword, countering and easily using the YunmengJiang Sword forms and movements. As he fights there, another person has found them and is fighting with CangSe Sanren, whose movements are unfamiliar and gliding. Yet, she’s hindered by the weight of her son, who is holding her too tight and is terrified.

More cultivators join and its just swords meeting swords, the couple dancing around one another and adapting to the slight handicap of Wei Ying. But of course, these people are after them. And they take no hesitation in targeting Wei Ying, further causing CangSe Sanren to turn to defense.

‘Gone,’

Wei Ying is watching. Is watching the sword forms of the people he is positive killed his parents. And he recognizes some of the moves. He doesn't want to say anything, because he hopes he's wrong. But then he sees the man fighting his father so flawlessly. Who knows exactly how to counter him. And he can see his thoughts confirmed when his father's expression has darkened into pain and anger and confusion.

He speaks, voice so cold, it could almost belong to the Second Jade, “Those are YunmengJiang Sword forms,”

Jiang Fengmian can feel a choke escape while Yu ZiYuan inhales sharply. Jin Ling's voice wavers, “There's LanlingJin too,”

“Oh god,” Jin ZiXuan exhales as his mother seems to go stiff.

Nie MingJue is the next person to point it out, “And Qishan Wen,”

Wen Qing and Wen Ning frown at once. Wen Ning looks at his sister, “Do y-you think S-sect Lead-Leader Wen...”

Wen Qing just clenches her fist.

Wei WuXian's face has turned dark and he grips his husband tightly, a cruel smile curling at his lips, “***Delightful,***”

One strike by a QishanWen sword form wielder slashes too close to Wei Ying. He screams and CangSe Sanren twists to block it, leaving her right flank open for a deep cut on his waist.

‘Just close your eyes,’

“MAMA!” Wei Ying yells without control.

CangSe Sanren’s old friend had also straightened up in alarm, staring at the blood.

Wei ChangZe hears it and turns. His moves became aggressive as he pushed forward to kick the man away and protect his wife from the others. CangSe Sanren is panting as she holds her own from behind, the two being back to back. Wei ChangZe is injured on his arm and the scent of blood is thick.

Some of the other cultivators are injured heavily, the one who had slashed at CangSe Sanren, already dead by Wei ChangZe’s sword. CangSe Sanren glances around, eyes widening as two more cultivators enter the field, accompanied by four large hounds.

‘The sun is going down,’

Wei Ying and Wei WuXian go stiff.

“Sick em!”

The hounds leap and the two are overrun by swords and fangs. Wei Ying is crying, screaming at the dogs to go away, “Bad dogs! Bad dogs! Bad men! Bad men!”

‘You’ll be alright,’

The moment the hounds moved, Wei Ying screamed, “SHIJIE!!!”

Jiang Yanli was already moving as Wei Ying leaped behind her and Jiang Cheng, trembling as he watched from behind him. Similarly, Wei WuXian jolted, pulling his legs up and exclaimed, “Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan!!!”

Lan Wangji and Jiang Wanyin already had arms in front of the male, the juniors slightly rising. Lan Xichen switched his gaze between the two Wei’s, alarmed, “He’s terrified of dogs?”

“Yes!” Jiang Cheng says, “We always assumed it was from the streets, but...”

“It might be worse,” Jiang Wanyin finishes.

“He hasn’t gotten over it?” Nie Mingjue asks shocked, “After 20, 30 years?”

Lan Wangji shakes his head, “Cloud Recesses doesn’t really allow pets, but I made sure to put a very specific, *no dogs allowed* rule,”

Lan Zhan is staring at Wei Ying, concerned. Hearing the rule, he turns to his uncle, “Uncle, can we add that?”

“Wha-” Lan Qiren is caught off guard, but his older version orders, “You better put it on the wall,”

“When he visits me, my own dog is put away and kept away. I even trained her to stay away from Daijue and protect him from any other dogs,” Jin Ling informed.

Cangse Sanren screams, sending her sword out and then letting her palm encase with spiritual energy. She slams her hand down, muttering an incantation under her breath. A beautiful and large array glows on the floor, a dome trapping their attackers and dogs inside. Cangse Sanren grabs her husband, “Hurry!”

They flee again.

‘No one can hurt you now,’

As the dogs are left behind, Wei Ying and Wei WuXian peak out a little more, but they’re still trembling. Wei Ying leans into his shijie, who reaches around to hug him and speaks softly, assuring him the dogs were gone and that they wouldn’t come close to him.

The Wei couple are dashing through the trees, CangSe Sanren’s sword in her sheathe as she holds her wound with one hand and her son with the other. They run quite the distance until CangSe Sanren feels the barrier’s energy far enough away. She slows down and glances at her husband, “A-Ze...”

Wei ChangZe holds her, kissing her forehead softly, “Its okay. We’re okay,”

‘Come morning light,’

Wei Ying whimpers and lifts his head, “B-Baba...M-Mama...”

The couple embrace him tightly, pain in both their eyes. Wei ChangZe places a few kisses on Wei Ying’s head as well, muttering, “You’re very brave A-Ying. You’re doing very good,”

Wei Ying just cries, “I’m sc-scared. B-bad men and ba-bad dogs!”

CangSe Sanren chokes on a sob and she hugs him tighter. Wei ChangZe grits his teeth and the three continue to walk to conserve some energy. As they walk, CangSe Sanren glances at her wound. She stared at it for some time and then her husband, then finally her son.

Her expression changes, “A-Ze...”

Wei ChangZe freezes and turns around. He takes one look at her face and says, “No. No, A-Se. No,”

CangSe Sanren looks at their son and Wei ChangZe follows her gaze. Then, the two of them meet again, a small nod passing between them.

“No,” Wei Ying whispers as the memory burns, “No, no,”

“A-Xian?” Jiang Yanli calls worriedly.

Wei Ying doesn’t hear her, too focused on the pain.

The noise of barks in the distance make them break into a run again-

And also cause the two Wei’s to freeze again.

Soon though, CangSe Sanren comes to a stop. Its sudden and she turns in that direction, Wei ChangZe following after. They stop in front of a tree, a tree that has a hole in it, large enough for a birds nest to lay in. CangSe Sanren lifts up Wei Ying and places him in the hollowed out tree, the boy startled and glancing up with wide teary eyes.

‘You and I’ll be safe and sound...’

Wei WuXian goes limp in his husband’s embrace, defeat coursing through him. Lan WangJi closes his eyes softly, nuzzling his face in his beloved’s hair.

Wei Ying on the other hand protests, “NO!”

Everyone knows. It's too easy to tell.

The music is no longer accompanied by words. But rather the soft humming of CangSe Sanren and Wei ChangZe. It stands out and is obviously part of the song, but they're not saying words. Just humming 'ooh' to the tune.

"Mama? Baba?" Wei Ying calls, voice shaking, "What's going on?"

"Sh, sh," CangSe Sanren smiles, but there are tears in her eyes, "My precious baby, its going to be okay,"

Wei Ying shakes his head and begins to cry, "Mama! Baba!"

"Sh, sh," Wei ChangZe reaches down to wipe the tears away, "A-Ying, Ying-Er, can you do something for us?"

Wei Ying sobs but nods his head.

"Wait for us here," Cangse Sanren says tenderly, "Until we come back for you, okay? And don't make any sound,"

Wei Ying chokes, crying harder, "No! D-don't leave! D-don't abandon me!"

Wei Ying is just staring, eyes wide and glassy. He can feel Jiang Yanli holding him firmly, trying to ground him.

Nie Huaisang feels something wet on his cheek and startles to realize he's crying. Wen Ning is the same, thinking of his own parent's death. The mood is so heavy.

“Oh, my love,” CangSe Sanren sobs with a small laugh, “Oh, we’re not A-Ying. I promise, we love you so, so much,”

Wei ChangZe whispers, “Which is why we have to do this. We have to keep you safe,”

“No! No! A-Ying doesn’t want to be safe, he wants Mama and Baba!” Wei Ying wails.

They keep soothing him, saying promises that will be broken. There’s tears falling down his parents face when they finally get Wei Ying to quiet down enough. Wei ChangZe and CangSe Sanren both lift Wei Ying up for a moment, just to hug him together and assure him that they love him so much.

Wei WuXian is crying. He has tears streaming down his face. He whispers to his husband, “I-its not fa-fair...”

Lan WangJi agreed. His husband was too good. Why did he have to suffer this much?

Wei Ying is holding himself back from breaking. He will *not* .

“My beautiful sunshine,” CangSe Sanren whispers as they return Wei Ying to his hiding spot. She swallows down a sob, pressing her forehead to his, “You’re a gift, A-Ying. You’re so bright, so kind, so strong. Be good, hm?”

Wei Ying nods firmly. He looks at them and then brings his lips up to a bright smile, “A-Ying loves you. A-Ying will be good,”

The two parents laugh sadly. They nod, Wei ChangZe whispering, “Our Ying-Er is the most good with the most beautiful heart and smile,”

CangSe Sanren nods, “Yes,” she glances back as she hears fading barks. She glances at her son and speaks quickly yet softly, “We love you, A-Ying,”

And she activates the illusion and barrier array just as they begin to step away and the dogs burst into the area, surrounding the two.

And Wei Ying chokes on a sob, catching himself just in time.

Jiang Yanli is crying, as are the juniors, despite them all trying to play it off.

‘Just close your eyes,’ The two sing together now.

And the battle rages on, the two slowly fighting off the dogs and the cultivators who join them. Its a sound of barks, growls, and clashing of swords. Wei ChangZe eyes the tree his son is hidden in and grunts. He turns, grabbing CangSe Sanren and running in the opposite direction, taking them away. AS they run, he releases his wife who understands. They look at one another and smile painfully, “Til death do we part?” she whispers.

Wei ChangZe smiles, “Til death do we part,”

Wei Ying almost screams, *‘NO! Why is it death?! Why can’t you just come find me?! Why can’t we just run?! Why why why?!!!!’*

The group is chasing them and one of the cultivators flys ahead, landing in front of the two. Soon, they’re surrounded in a small clearing. Wei ChangZe and CangSe Sanren stand back to back swords out. One of the masked men chuckles darkly, “Where’s the child?”

Neither answer, just gripping their swords firmer.

“Yunmeng,” Wei ChangZe utters finally, “A-Mian and ZiYuan took him,”

“HA! Sending the son of two traitors to the Jiang sect back there? I always knew Jiang Fengmian was a fucking coward,”

Yu ZiYuan’s eyes narrow while the three children all glare at the man. Jiang Fengmian just sighs.

Wei ChangZe’s gaze turns dangerous, “Watch your mouth. A-Mian may seem like a complacent and quiet man, but he’s far from it. Don’t forget what type of person his father was,”

Jiang Fengmian tenses and coughs, “Isn’t this about A-Xian’s family?”

Wei WuXian and Jiang Wanyin exchange glances.

“Is this really the time to debate about a dead abusive man?” CangSe Sanren spat.

For a moment there’s utter silence.

“...father?” Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli say at the same time, eyes turning to the Jiang Sect Leader who has a very dark and tight expression.

Hearing his children, it fades back into his usual solemn smile. He pats his son’s head, “It is not your concern,”

“Well, your husband is a bastard child of that man, so yes,” Another says.

Jiang Fengmian’s expression vanishes into shock, “ *What ?*”

Jiang Wanyin clears his throat, “So, Mother, do we have the answer as to why no elders objected to my decision as placing Shixiong as my heir?”

Yu ZiYuan does not even answer, mouth agape as she stares at the screen.

Wei Ying blurts out, “I have Jiang blood?!”

“What the fuck is this one viewing?” Jin ZiXuan whispers.

Wei ChangZe’s sword flies and stabs the man in the chest, startling the stand off. Wei ChangZe’s face is dark with anger and as the sword comes back he spits, “Incorrect. That man knew I was his child the entire time. You think a random kid could suddenly be brought into the sect after his mother died?”

“WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?!” Jin Ling blew up.

“I have no idea,” Lan JingYi mutters.

“A-Die...” Lan SiZhui calls, “Did you know?”

“Oh yeah, I figured it out when A-Cheng showed up at the Jingshi with a bunch of stuff he found in the treasury,” Wei WuXian nodded.

Jiang Wanyin looked at his father who seemed on the edge of fainting, “It seemed my A-Die didn’t know,”

“I did not,” Jiang Fengmian whispered, “He never told me...”

‘You’ll be alright,’

With the death of the man, the fight begins. Its difficult the couple are both injured and the complexity of avoiding the fangs and teeth of the dogs along with the swipes of swords. They've been split up in the clearing and its an overwhelming and bloody sight. But anyone can tell who is going to win.

Wei Ying sees it. Sees the brown hound readying to jump at his father who is too busy with cultivators to realize. As the dog leaps, Wei Ying moves as well, "NO!"

He grunts as he rolls on the floor, body falling straight to the image of his father as the dog grips on and slashes deep. **Wei ChangZe chokes, bloody spitting and a sword goes through his abdomen. He falls to the floor.**

Jiang Fengmian screams his brother's - his half brother, not his sworn, his brother in true blood - name.

Wei Ying freezes on the floor, eyes following his father and watching as the cultivators apprehend him and ensure to beat him up to keep him down. There's too much blood.

"Wei Ying,"

Wei Ying answers without turning, a whisper of horror, "Lan Zhan..."

The Second Jade looks at his older self who practically glares at him to do something. Lan Zhan moves forward to help Wei Ying back to a sitting position, but the boy is barely even present.

'Come morning light,'

"A-ZE!" CangSe Sanren screams, moves and trying to fight the people, but its too much. With one out of the way, they all can focus on the heavily injured Sanren. It's

quick and easy as they kick her down, her head hitting the floor and worsening the injury. She is yanked up by her hair, sword kicked far away and her husband just barely conscious.

The men stand in front of her, “Alright, we’re all here for different things. Jin Guangshan wants her alive-”

“JIN ZIXUAN!!” Wei Ying can hear himself scream in anger.

Jin ZiXuan flinches violently, “I didn’t- this is literally not my fault!”

Wei Ying glares at the peony robes before spitting, “You’re right. But after we get out of here, you better be ready to fucking lead a sect cause I am going to *kill* your father,”

Wei WuXian speaks up, “Please castrate him while you’re at it,”

“You can’t just go and kill a sect leader,” Yu ZiYuan tells him.

Wei Ying suddenly turns his furious gaze to her. He stares at her before snorting, “Right, I forgot. You’re probably enjoying this entire thing. My parents on their knees and hunted like fucking animals. My apologies Madam Yu, it seemed to have skipped my mind that you despise my blood,”

The cold words make everyone stare at Wei Ying.

Yu ZiYuan flinches.

Then she sputters, reverting to rage, “Enjoying this?! How could you say that?! You fucking brat! Your mother and I were-”

She stopped when Wen Qing cuts her off, “Madam Yu, we’ve all heard the rumors of how you think and treat A-Ying and his parents. Plus, you do whip him without mercy with a first class spiritual weapon. Pardon the target of your abuse to think you hate him and his family,”

Yu ZiYuan moves to scream again, but Jiang Fengmian reaches over and grips her wrist. The contact makes her freeze and stare at him. He pleads, “My lady, please,”

She keeps her mouth shut.

“Late Madam Jiang wanted ChangZe killed after finding who he was-”

Wei Ying’s body goes still. Lan Zhan feels it and glances at his brother, knowing only his brother would be able to see his panic and worry.

Wei WuXian barks out a laugh, “Fucking hell- this getting even better!”

Jiang Fengmian is horrified.

“And Wen Ruohan doesn’t really care as long as we have the location of Baoshan Sanren,” The man finishes

The Wen siblings both let out matching sighs while Wei Ying’s eyes darken.

Three of the great sects killed his parents.

Three of the great sects took his parents from him.

Three of the great sects are going to *suffer* .

Wei WuXian smirks darkly, “Karma’s a fucking bitch,”

Ouyang Zizhen sniffed, muttering under his breath, “Its not fair. Senior Wei doesn't deserve to suffer like this,”

His sworn brothers agreed passionately.

The group laughs as CangSe Sanren glares at them. A man steps forward and pulls down his mask as he stands in front of Wei ChangZe. Wei ChangZe’s eyes widen.

“MingTian...” Jiang Fengmian croaked.

Wei Ying stared at that face with utter betrayal.

Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli gasp.

“Who is that?” Nie Huaisang asks.

“He’s...” Jiang Cheng stops, unable to process the entire ordeal. He looks at his brother, his smiling happy brother, who looks so...so... *miserable* .

Jiang Yanli’s voice is tight with anger, “Pan MingTian. He’s one of the seniors. He’s actually one of the more closer seniors to A-Xian,”

Wei WuXian glared with hurt, voice thick with betrayal, “He was the first senior I beat in a spar. The same spar that got me my head disciple position. God, he was the one that helped me understand what that position even meant!”

There was a pause.

“Fucking bastard!” Nie MingJue roared, “How could he dare?!”

Lan WangJi was glaring venomously at the projection.

“Da-Shixiong,” Pan MingTian greeted, “You’re irrelevant. No one cares if you live or die, except for Madam Jiang,”

“She’s dead!” CangSe Sanren screamed, “STOP IT!”

Wei ChangZe glared, “Does A-mian know you’re here?”

The man smiled, “If he did, do you think he knows why?”

Wei ChangZe glares, “You’re a disgrace,”

Yu ZiYuan had subconsciously begun to twist Zidian on her finger as she glared at the Jiang disciple.

Pan MingTian laughed before unsheathing his sword. He swiped off the YunmengJiang Clarity Bell and tossed it in the air. He grinned, “I should keep this. If your son is at Lotus Pier, maybe I’ll give it to him. Ha! Imagine that, giving his dead daddy’s bell and he won’t even know,”

Wei Ying screams in anger about to kill the fucking projection when Lan Zhan catches him just in time, “Wei Ying-”

“I’m going to kill him!!! I’m going to fucking kill him!!!” Wei Ying promised, the weight of the tassel on his waist becoming too noticable.

Jin ZiXuan looked at Jiang Yanli, whose face was furious. Jiang Cheng had his jaw clenched, “He did that. God damnit, he was the one who- fucking hell!”

CangSe Sanren made to lunge, but she was held back and yanked down again by the hair, before being kicked over the gash on her waist. Blood spat from her mouth.

Wei ChangZe looked at his wife, before softening his expression and giving her a loving smile, “Its okay. I’ll wait,”

“NO!” CangSe Sanren screamed just as Pan MingTian snapped his fingers and the sword in his hands went right through Wei ChangZe’s heart.

“You and I’ll be safe and sound...”

“BABA!!!” Wei Ying screamed, the yell making tears spring to eyes and bodies to flinch in pain. Lan Zhan held him tighter, closing his eyes and gritting his teeth. Wei Ying trembled in his arms, leaning back into the older boy as the first streams broke down Wei Ying’s cheeks.

Wei WuXian closed his eyes and let his husband pull him in. Into his safespace, into the sandalwood scent, into his lifeline. Wei WuXian exhaled and whimpered, “A-Zhan...”

“Sh...” Lan WangJi whispered back, “I’m here, my love,”

The music returned to the gentle humming of the two voices, but it was hardly the attention of everyone.

CangSe Sanren watched as her husband’s body fell to the ground, limp. She broke down, tears streaming as she glared up at the men, not able to express the pain and

anger she was feeling.

Except in three words.

“I’ll kill you,” she whispered, “i’ll kill you!!”

Her sword jerked up and flew forward, yells of alarm as they began to block it. Pan MingTian was quick to slink behind trees and hide from her view, watching as CangSe Sanren did indeed claim a couple of lives. Her rage was overwhelming and her hands glowed white, talisman flying from her sleeves and at them.

The blood was so much.

No one could even fault her either. They just watched her, the beautiful and graceful CangSe Sanren going mad with grief and anger.

She was brought to a stop when the wolves jumped on her, claws scratching at her and teeth biting. The sword swerved to help its master, slashing at the wolves, whose attention turned to catching and keeping the sword down. But the damage was done, CangSe Sanren was bleeding profoundly, shaking from exhaustion.

She whispered, “Ying-er...”

Wei Ying whimpered softly, “Mama,”

He curled, turning his head instinctively and pressing himself closer to Lan Zhan, who froze as his ears turned red. Lan WangJi glanced at the younger version of himself and his husband, finding some warmth there at seeing the progress.

A man was about to say something when one of the cultivators burst from the trees, “Hey! There’s company! And we’re in deep shit if Madam Yu finds us,”

Everyone in the room went deathly still.

Wei Ying froze and lifted his head, "...what?"

Wei WuXian glanced at Yu ZiYuan who had gone still and pale. Her expression was complicated and at first, he had assumed it was anger and disgust. But now...no...no, no... that was guilt.

Wei WuXian sat up straighter, staring at her, "What did you do to my mother?"

Yu ZiYuan stared at him, mouth opening to say something. But instead, she just released a small choke, and froze, closing her eyes and shaking her head.

Jiang Wanyin shared an alarmed gaze with Lan WangJi and Grandmaster Lan.

Jiang Yanli and Jiang Cheng were staring at their mother terrified. Then they looked at Wei Ying, who was staring at Yu ZiYuan like he had seen a ghost.

"Well she can't find her either!" one hissed motioning to CangSe Sanren.

"But we're not supposed to kill her,"

"Then don't," one said, "Just make Yu ZiYuan kill her,"

Wei WuXian's voice turned dark, "Madam...Yu..."

"I didn't..." Yu ZiYuan's voice was so quiet, "It wasn't..."

“I got an idea, scram!”

They group disperses and CangSe Sanren lets out a river of blood. She groans, trying to call out and move. She whispers, “ZiYuan...Mei...meimei...”

Yu ZiYuan turns away, tears springing in her eyes, “FUCK!”

Wei Ying can’t move. He’s not even sure if he’s breathing until Lan Zhan’s voice is near his ear, “Wei Ying...breathe...”

Wei Ying inhales shakily. His eyes are fixed on his mother...his mother who is still alive.

The sound of arguing can be heard, its faint but the scene switches slightly to show Yu ZiYuan talking with a QishanWen disciple. The disciple is injured and speaking, “I would kill it from here too, but as you can see, I’m nearly depleted of spiritual energy. I would love if you could just send your sword to kill it since you are Madam Yu,”

Yu ZiYuan scowls, “Why would I kill it from here where I can miss it? I should go there-”

“You can’t!” The man exclaims, “Its an array, we set up. It will cleanse the corpse but its also got a barrier to keep it trapped since getting too close caused injuries,”

Yu ZiYuan frowns, staring at the bushes with suspicion. Her hand runs over the hilt of her sword carefully. Seeing her hesitation, the man pushes, “Unless of course, I’ve assumed wrong. I heard you were very strong which is why I thought you sparring a little energy wouldn’t hurt. But if it would hurt then-”

Yu ZiYuan glared, “Shut up! How dare you! Fine, fine, I’ll kill it for you incompetant cultivators!”

“No...” Wei Ying whispered, “No, please, no,”

“ZiYuan...” Jin PeiZhi is pale in horror and Yu ZiYuan has hung her head, scrunching her robes so tightly that her knuckles are white.

The humming goes louder and the scene returns to CangSe Sanren with the trail of a purple sword glare. And they follow it with the rising music as the blade makes contact with CangSe Sanren, whose eyes widen.

Wei Ying shrieks, “MAMA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

Yu ZiYuan chokes and she closes her eyes. She had kept her shame and guilt of this incident locked away so tightly.

The music ends as the sword pulls out and flies back to return to Yu ZiYuan.

Yet the scene does not end. The wen disciples are gone and it is only Yu ZiYuan, Jinzhu and Yinzhu. When the sword returns, Yu ZiYuan’s eyes widen in shock, staring at the blood on the blade, “This...”

“Madam...” Yinzhu points at the blade.

Yu ZiYuan flips to see the fabric of a robe. Her expression suddenly turns startled, “This belongs to a hu....”

She catches on and suddenly, shes running forward to the clearing. When she breaks through, everyone watches as Yu ZiYuan’s face goes pale and her expression becomes horrified. The sword falls to the ground.

“No...” Yu Ziyuan whispers, “No...”

The scene vanishes and they’re back in Swords Hall.

Its so silent.

So utterly silent and so heavy.

Wei Ying stares, stares at where his parents had just been. Stared at where they had just died. Stared and stared. Wei Ying’s mind crashes over his head and the suffocating pain in his chest explodes.

He wails, throwing off Lan Zhan and jumping at Yu ZiYuan, who flinches back, “YOU KILLED MY MOTHER!!!”

Wei WuXian shoots from the throne to catch his younger self, hand slamming down on Suibian’s hilt to keep the sword sheathed. Yu ZiYuan stares at them, at Wei WuXian, with shock.

The man doesn’t even glance at her. Wei Ying screams, thrashing in the hold, “LET ME GO! LET ME GO! SHE KILLED MY MOTHER!!!”

Wei WuXian grunted, struggling to keep the kid hold. He hissed, “So what? What are you going to do? Kill her?”

Yu ZiYuan winced, but said absolutely nothing. The thick chokehold of guilt was leaving her weak.

“That’s not going to bring them back!” Wei WuXian grunts, jaw clenched and eyes dark with nothing, “I killed so many people and It did nothing! I took on 3000 cultivators after my

shijie died and she remained dead! I destroyed an entire sect after my husband went limp in my arms, and he stayed GONE!”

Lan Wangji’s eyes widened his movements to approach his husband halting. His eyes turn to look at his uncle, who just gives him a small glance, before focusing on the Weis.

Wei WuXian shoved Wei Ying away from Yu ZiYuan, the kid gasping and crumpling down to the floor, “SHUT UP!”

Jiang Yanli, Wen Qing, and Lan Zhan all shot towards Wei Ying, who all but shoved them away. He clenched his jaw and turned back, glaring at Wei WuXian with tears running down his face and enraged silver eyes. Wei WuXian met it back with a tired one. Wei Ying spat, “Are you- what is wrong with you?! Don’t you feel anything?!”

Wei WuXian shrugged, “I do. But I’ve felt so much pain and betrayal and loss that its just another smile,”

Jiang Wanyin stood up, face twisted in regret. He walks forward, “A-Xian...I’m sorry,”

“Like hell you’re sorry!” Wei Ying stood up, “You’re not sorry for making me do this! Or watch that! You’re only sorry that your mother is a fucking killer!”

Wei Ying feels things snapping and there’s a burning in his veins. His head *hurts* so much. Wei Ying laughs, “You can save everyone! Your parents, your sect, your sister, Chifeng Zun, Lan Wangji, Wen Qing, Wen Ning- so many people. You can fix all their broken little homes,”

Wei Ying grabs the lapels of Jiang Wanyin’s robes, “What about mine?! What about my parents?! Why didn’t you save them!?”

Jiang Wanyin freezes, staring at the broken version of his brother. He can feel guilt begin to pile with the words, can feel shame and raw pain echo in the room. It didn’t matter that they

didn't know anything about one another before, it didn't matter anymore who dies in the future, who was involved, who they had all become. Right now, it was just Wei Ying.

The smiling, bright, sunshine, boy breaking down and learning that his parents were murdered by the very sect he lived and swore loyalty to.

Wei Ying's body lost strength and he pushed Jiang Wanyin back as he stepped back, tears brimming, "My parents...my lovely parents..." he sobbed, falling to his knees, "I want my parents...I want my parents..." his body shuddered, "Mama...Baba...I'll be good, I'll be good, A-Ying will be good..."

Wei WuXian swallows, looking down with a pained gaze. Yu Ziyuan has tears in her eyes, a few slipping down her face. There's nothing to say, what were they even supposed to say?

The scent of blood snaps everyone back into alert.

It's Lan Zhan who finds it first, "WEI YING!"

A big flush of blood choked out of Wei Ying's mouth, as his nose began to bleed as well. Wei Ying shuddered violently, hands trembling and reaching for his head. Wen Qing rushes forward as Lan WangJi orders, "A-Yuan play *Cleansing* ! He's qi deviating!"

Wei Ying fights against Wen Qing, before his head and core finally snap. Wei Ying gasps in pain, before suddenly going limp against the older girl, who pales.

The first few notes of *Cleansing* strum out from Lan SiZhui's finger tips. His skills cause the three Lans of the past to glance back slightly surprised. Grandmaster Lan snaps them from the daze, "WangJi, both of you, join them. Xichen use your xiao,"

Lan WangJi had already jumped on it, his qin out and producing noise. Soon, a third guqin and a single xiao joins them. The combined efforts along with Wen Qing working quickly

from a medical standpoint is a feat to see. The effects of *Cleansing* calming everyone down and bringing back a soothing feeling to the earlier and heavy tension.

“A-Ying,” Lan WangJi glances up, “Can you extract the resentment?”

“I can,” Wei WuXian says nonchalantly, “The question is do I really want to,”

Jiang Wanyin turns to his brother, “Shixiong...please don’t do this. We get a chance to fix things to be really really happy, we want you to be happy. You can’t do that dead,”

“I will be delighted in death,” Wei WuXian deadpans.

Lan WangJi sighs, “Okay, if you won’t I’ll do it,”

Wei WuXian’s expression changes and he curses, “No! Fuck! Fine!”

Chenqing raises to his lips and a different tone joins *Cleansing*. It’s still beautiful and intertwines perfectly. Wen Qing gasps startled as Wei Ying’s body releases another gush of blood from the mouth, Wen Qing rolling Wei Ying on his side to ensure the boy didn’t choke. Black trails of resentment began to filter out and upwards, everyone watching in utter disbelief. Wen Qing monitored and was impressed, “It...its such a clean and easy way to remove the resentment from the meridians...it doesn’t even leave damage!”

Ouyang Zizhen and Jin Ling boasted, “Of course not!” “My Daijiu came up with it!”

Wei WuXian nudges Lan WangJi after a few minutes of playing and the chief cultivator switches to match the melody. Lan SiZhui keeps on *Cleansing* with Lan Zhan and Lan Xichen, but everyone watches the married couple. Lan WangJi’s blue spiritual energy slithers upwards towards the swirling black mass, curling around it and soothing it. Slowly, the black mass begins to decrease with white pops of energy as the spiritual energy cleanses it.

After all the resentment is gone, the two stop playing. Lan SiZhui doesn't stop until he gets the okay, placing a hand on the strings. Lan Zhan and Lan Xichen stop as well. Jiang Yanli moves forward, looking down at Wei Ying. She pulls out a handkerchief and begins to wipe away the blood, "Will he be okay?"

"No," Wei WuXian tells her bluntly.

"What?!" Everyone exclaims.

Jiang Wanyin translates, "He'll be fine from the qi deviation. From the emotional and revelation...no. Probably not,"

"He just found out he wears the colors of his parents murders," Wei WuXian says, before turning to Yu ZiYuan, who freezes at the gaze, "Tell me, you killed my mother. Is that why you never liked me? Because I was a physical manifestation of the woman you murdered? Because you couldn't handle it so you decided to forget and just whip everyone in anger and blame things on everyone else?"

Yu Ziyuan says nothing, just staring. She opens her mouth slowly, but Wei WuXian stops her, "I don't care what you have to say. It won't do anything to me, after we're done here, I'll be dead. You have anyone to explain things to, you talk to him," he points to his younger self.

Whatever reaction she has, he doesn't see it. He turns and walks to his younger self and picks him up, "Little Lan Zhan, Baobei, come along. Let's put this crybaby in his room to rest,"

"Me?" Lan Zhan blinks.

"Yes," Grandmaster Lan says, "You have no connection to his parents killers and you're one of the few who ever actually helped,"

"But...I..."

“I’ll give you advice,” Lan WangJi promises, opening the door for his husband, “Hurry up now,”

Lan Zhan grimaces, glaring at his brother’s teasing smile, before following. As they leave, Lan WangJi’s gaze turns cold as he looks at Jiang Wanyin, “Talk to your family,”

The door slams shut and Jiang Wanyin is left with a storm of emotions.

Nie YongZhen - the name I have given MingJue and Huaisang’s father (Yong - brave, valiant, courageous, fierce / Zhen - attain, reach, approach, superior)

Lan HuiLang - the name I’ve given to Qinghen Jun (Hui - kindness / Lang - clear, bright)

Jin PeiZhi - the name I’ve given Madam Jin (Peizhi - admiring Iris)

Lan ShuFang - the name I’ve given Madam Lan (Shu - good, charming, kind / Fang - beautiful, virtuous)

Chapter End Notes

If I almost cried while writing and going over Wei Ying's breakdown multiple times in my head, then its nobody's business.

Also, now I seriously don't know where to go from here. Like- do I dive straight into the Jiang family pain? I don't have a song for them yet decided, I mean, I have some for A-Cheng and Yanli. Even some for them plus A-Ying, but not one for their parents.

Song - Safe and Sound by Taylor Swift

Lifeline

Chapter Notes

This chapter took a long time. Mostly because i was just stuck on what song to use and how to write the aftermath of the last chapter. There's a little ooc, but im not too bothered by it since this IS a FANfiction and an AU where YZY kills CSSR.

I've also been really tired and busy. My life is beginning to get kind of serious, so writing is not a primary thing :(

Anyway! Let's start!

Here is over 21,000 words of love

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Jiang Wanyin had known that when he had decided to come back and show the people of the past their future, he would have to face his parents. More so, he would have to *fix* his parents. Hopefully make them understand their faults, lock them in a room so they can fix things. He knew that damage would already be done, but he believed he could prevent anything worse. He wasn't who his past self was. He was confident in himself. He had found himself.

He had learned that he didn't need their approval, he just needed to be himself and do what he believed was right. To be who he was and protect those he loved to the best of his abilities. He didn't have to be the strongest. He didn't need to be perfect. He was a Jiang, and a Jiang could do the impossible. A Jiang was a ranger. A Jiang was who they wanted themselves to be.

He could face them, he could. He could stop their fights if they started one. He would defend his siblings. He would defend himself. They needed to realize that all the problems were their fault. He had wanted to teach his mother that her grudge was pointless. That yelling at the three children who were supposed to be hers to nourish and protect would fix *nothing*. He had wanted to help her realize that his brother's parents were already long gone.

But of course, his mother knew that. Had *always* known that as it was her who had killed CangSe Sanren. It was her who had seen the bodies. And Jiang WanYin could say with a strong credibility that it was most likely her who buried them. Who preserved the swords, the items, the pendent. It was Yu ZiYuan who had caused Wei WuXian to ever be brought into

the YumengJiang Sect. It was Yu ZiYuan who had always brought up Wei WuXian being CangSe Sanren's blood, yet never Wei ChangZe's. It was Yu ZiYuan who was close enough to CangSe Sanren to be referred to as a *sister* . A *Meimei*.

And yet, it was Yu ZiYuan who had been hurting his brother for their entire childhood.

He stares at the two doors of the Swords Hall, the silence of the room just settling. No one knew exactly what to say, no one knew how to break it. How to address the events that had just transpired. Jiang Wanyin blinked softly, glancing over to where Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli stood, gazing at the door with complicated expressions of pain and even some guilt.

Though...it wasn't their fault either.

Jiang Wanyin turned slowly, turned to fix his eyes on Yu ZiYuan and Jiang Fengmian, both who had yet to move from where they sat. He stared down at them, expression clouded over, yet guarded. Yu ZiYuan was staring down at her lap, fingers clenching her robes with white knuckles. There was a faint tremble in her figure and Jiang Wanyin had spotted the shame and guilt when it had been revealed. The secret his mother had so cruelly kept away. Kept away so deep that she had convinced herself to hate the woman she had murdered, that she had convinced herself to be cruel to the child she orphaned in place of facing what she had caused. Of the blood on her hands.

Jiang Wanyin shifted to his father. Jiang Fengmian looked as pale as a ghost, his carefully neutral expression shattered. Jiang Wanyin could only phantom the thoughts running in his head.

His father loved Wei WuXian, he knew it. He knew his father cared. But he also knew that his father had turned blind eye to many things, choosing his mask of silence in fear of escalating a situation. He always sought to shy from conflicts. And yet...and yet, now he had learned a great deal of things. That his sworn brother, his best friend, was his half-brother, that the ward and martial nephew he had taken in was just as granted a place in the line of succession as any member of a branch family. No, even more so. Wei WuXian's father was a child of the sect leader just like Jiang Fengmian, meaning Wei Ying was a member of the inner clan, heir following Jiang Cheng himself.

Jiang Fengmian had learned that his brother and sister-in-law were killed, had been hunted down by members of his own sect, by his own mother because of that bloodline. And to top it all off, he found that the woman who had led him to fear uttering his dearest sibling's name was the woman who had killed his brother's wife. That had caused his nephew to be an orphan. That had *whipped* him with a first-class spiritual weapon to please a servant girl from the QishanWen Sect. That had kept such a thing hidden for years- no, she had kept it until her death. Those of the future had no idea. Yu ZiYuan had told *no one* .

“Yu...ZiYuan...” Jiang Fengmian whispered slowly, inhaling deeply and turning to look at her.

Jiang Wanyin watched his mother grow tense, the grip on her robes becoming even tighter. She lifted her head up slightly, revealing the ashamed expression in her eyes. Her beautifully sharp features had always held anger. In just about every memory Jiang Wanyin had of her, it was all anger and hate. His bitter mother. It was how he had known her. Always visualized her. Even in his dreams, she was shouting and scowling.

The mother in front of him was one he had never seen before. He checks his younger self and Jiang Yanli, to see them staring at their parents with expressions that seem to mirror his own, but with heavier feelings. He can see frustration and confusion when they stare at Yu ZiYuan.

Why?

Jiang Fengmian stares at her expression for a few moments, before sighing and speaking up, “I...I don't even know what I'm supposed to say,”

Yu ZiYuan's guilt doubles. She hated it and her defence acted up without much thought. She attempted a scowl, but it was hardly effective, “Of course you don't. You never say anything when it comes to *him* ,”

Jiang Wanyin steps in before a full argument even had a chance of beginning, “A-Niang, do you really think you have a right to refer to A-Xian as some dirty stain you could never remove. Or is that what he is to you? A physical stain of the blood you have on your hands that you have decided to all but ignore for years and years, festering into some false hate and anger. A-Niang, do you really think anyone knows what to say right now?”

He can't help but glare at her when protective fury comes up, "Do you think Wei WuXian knows what to say to you right now?!"

Yu ZiYuan stares at him, eyes wide and expression frozen into one of anger and guilt. She grits her teeth, glaring to the side, "Don't speak on things you do not understand!"

"Madam Yu," Grandmaster Lan speaks darkly, "Why do you not take that sentence for yourself? A-Xian has learned that the woman that was supposed to be his mother figure, the woman that has hated him, abused him mentally and physically, that he had once strived to gain recognition and acceptance from *has killed his own mother* . Do you really think you can tell any of us to not speak on things we do not understand when it is you who has been at fault for everything you ever blamed A-Xian for?!"

That seemed to have hit right where it hurt the most, because Yu ZiYuan *flinched* . She then glared furiously at Grandmaster Lan tears in her eyes. She shot to her feet, a multitude of emotions on her face, "Of course I know that!!! Do you think I do not know that it is my fault that he is even in my home!? Do you think I do not know that it is my fault he was on the streets for four years!? Do you think I did not look for him when I realized who had died on my sword?!"

Jiang Fengmian and Madam Jin have rose to their feet, along with Lan Qiren. The young heirs and Nie Sect Leader all remain seated, eyes wide as they watch. Yu ZiYuan pants slightly, turning away, "I have locked away this so deep for the sole reason I wished him to never know what happened to his parents. It was better for him to believe they were killed on a nighthunt like normal cultivators rather than murdered in cold blood! The revenge of a child is one that is almost impossible to rid of!"

"But does he not have that right to get revenge?!" Jiang Fengmian can't help but challenge his wife, "ZiYuan, you are telling us right now, that you have all but killed A-Xian's mother and yet you have treated him with such harshness since I brought him back! Not only that, but you would go so far in your treatment to use Zidian on him!? How old was he when you whipped him then?!"

"17," Jiang Wanyin answered, before muttering, "Next year...everything starts getting worse next year,"

Madam Jin stared at her friend, doubting everything she had heard regarding Wei WuXian from the woman before her, “ZiYuan, there were so many things to do. You could’ve done so many other things!”

“Like what?! Admit to murder?!” Yu ZiYuan challenged and then scowled at her husband, “I bet you would prefer that! Then you’d have a wonderful excuse to get rid of me!”

Jiang Fengmian hisses, “In such a moment like this and you’re still accusing others!”

Jiang Wanyin stepped in again and yelled, “For fucks sake, it doesn’t matter anymore!!”

Everyone stares at him, but Jiang Wanyin stares at his mother, “The past is the past, CangSe Sanren is dead. Her husband is dead,”

He then looks towards the door, “but their only child is still alive and has a fate worse than hell itself. A-Niang, you do not have the *right* to even ask for his forgiveness. That is if you would actually ask for it. The only thing you have to do is talk, and you owe him an apology. You owe him everything you’ve done to him. You owe him a *mother* !”

“He’s not my child,” Yu ZiYuan spits out with difficulty and Jiang Wanyin can’t believe she’s still trying to avoid the matter. Still trying to play a facade. Still refusing to accept what she had done all those years ago and all the years after. But then again...it was painstakingly familiar to him. He wonders, briefly, if this is how Lan WangJi had felt regarding him all those years before.

Jiang Yanli seems to be in disbelief as well, speaking up, “A-NIANG!! Is your pride really worth it right now?!” She then shakes her head, pain in her voice, “A-Niang, you have so much shame and guilt over this event, so much that you’ve gone to the point of convincing yourself that you hate him and his family. That you hate his mother. A-Niang, your pride is what caused you to send that sword out,”

Yu ZiYuan goes as still as statue, blood draining rapidly from her face as *her daughter* says the words that have haunted her ever since that day.

“Your pride caused his pain. Your pride costed Aunt Wei her life. It cost A-Xian his family. It is costing you your marriage! It’s costing A-Cheng his passion! It’s costing me my childhood! It’s costing Father his voice! Mother, is your pride really worth it for everything its caused!?!???” Jiang Yanli screams, tears clutching the corner of her eyes.

Jiang Cheng grips his sister tightly, avoiding the eyes of everyone else in the room. Jiang Fengmian looks so tired and hopeless, checking the older version of his son who is staring at his mother with frustration and hurt. Yu ZiYuan stands silent and still, her heart beating and the voice in her head mocking. Her daughter’s words are like knives, the memories she had seen are like knives.

‘Auntie Yu,’

Yu ZiYuan feels a sob etch itself from her mouth, before she snaps a hand over her mouth in horror. The tears are not stopped though. Jiang Wanyin feels his shoulder’s untense because he knows that they have managed to crack his mother’s armor. That he has a chance to *maybe* fix things. He does not know what will happen to Wei Ying, not after this. He does not know if his mother will ever gain the small love her brother had held for her. He does not know how Wei Ying will look at the purple robes he was wearing ever again.

He does not know if Wei Ying will be able to look at Jiang Cheng, who has always been his mother’s son, ever again.

He speaks slowly, “When A-Xian wakes up, you should speak to him,”

“Both of them?” Madam Jin is confused.

“...my shixiong won’t care,” Jiang Wanyin says with pain, “He’s not the same anymore. My Mother is dead to him, has been for a very long time. He will be angry, hurt, but he will not search for an explanation. He stopped caring for those sort of answers when he lost his husband,”

The atmosphere seems to droop further. Jiang Yanli sniffles slightly, Jiang Cheng gritting his teeth in anger at the words of his brother's fate. Lan Xichen feels his heartache, reminding himself once more of the promise he had made to the young boy in his head.

Yu ZiYuan glances towards the doors and then at her children. She stares at their reaction, before her eyes move to Lan SiZhui. This was Wei WuXian's son, his future son. A grandson CangSe Sanren should've been able to spoil and meet. She could see the pain in his expression, knew that even his life had not been so kind. For all her fabrication, she had never wished death upon CangSe Sanren's son. Never such a fate as the one that was coming for him. She had approved of the match between him and Lan WangJi. She was glad to know it was a happy one, even if it had been hidden deep just like every other good feeling she'd had towards him. Just like how she had hidden her guilt and pain from seeing that damn smile that was too much like *hers* .

The voice in her head whispers traitorously, *'CangSe must hate you. She'd forgive you for killing her, you know that. She'd never forgive you for what you've done to her child,'*

Yu ZiYuan grits her teeth painfully, heart twisting in a familiar way. Her own son had told her she didn't deserve to ask for that forgiveness. Yu ZiYuan knows its true. But she is a prideful woman. She had always found her pride as her reward. As a way to make herself known in household with two elder sisters. Her pride was her armor. Her pride had been her weapon.

Her pride which had become her demon .

"Okay," she whispered.

She turned to her husband, "I will...I will talk to him,"

He smiles at her, one of slight relief and happiness. There is something else, but she does not have the comprehension to decode it. She swallows down her sobs, "Will we wait again?"

"Yes," Grandmaster Lan agrees, "And maybe, we should show some happy things,"

“Like Wei-Xiong’s and Lan-Xiong’s relationship?!” Nie Huaisang suddenly pipes up with glee.

Jiang Wanyin snorts, “That depends on the progress made by the Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi of your time,”

He then thinks of something and takes a step towards the doors, speaking over his shoulder, “Let’s not venture too far from this room. I’ll be back,”

He leaves the Sword’s Hall and heads towards Wei Ying’s room. With steady steps, he slowly finds himself in front of the room. He knocks once, lightly, before opening the door. He’s greeted with the sight of Wei WuXian sitting on a chair near the bed, eyes closed in concentration and hand gently holding Wei Ying’s wrist. The younger Wei is asleep and laid on his bed, the blood from earlier cleanly wiped away. Closer to the door, Jiang Wanyin finds Lan WangJi standing beside Lan Zhan, the two discussing something, which paused as Jiang Wanyin entered the room.

“Wanyin,” His ice-block brother-in-law greeted him.

“WangJi,” he returns casually, before making a beeline to his brother.

Wei WuXian opens his eyes when Jiang Wanyin is only two steps away, straightening up and releasing his younger self. He glances up, only to blink and take the gaze downward. Jiang Wanyin kneels in front of his brother, placing his hands over his brother’s and leaning his head in the older’s lap. Wei WuXian responds to the gesture easily, the other hand raising to gently stroke the sect leader’s head.

Jiang Wanyin relaxes into it, closing his eyes and lets himself drift for just a while. And he knows Wei WuXian wouldn’t call him back until he was ready. That was just how he was. Lan WangJi had seen them do this before, both ways, and Wei WuXian had his own version of this escape with Lan WangJi. But this particular gesture was one they learned from their sister. And they had taught it to their children, to their nephew.

Lan Zhan glanced away in respect of the intimacy shared between the brothers. He met the expression of his older version again, the male glancing at the two with a slightly concerned gaze, before catching Lan Zhan's eyes. Lan Zhan asked softly, "You will not go?"

"Just because I am his husband does not mean I am his only source of safety and comfort," Lan Wangji speaks gently, yet the words are heavy with a weight that stems from his past, his husband's past, "I will not keep him from the place or people he calls home,"

Lan Zhan doesn't understand Jiang Cheng. He really doesn't. And from what he saw in Cloud Recesses, he always treats Wei Ying with harsh words and scowls. His feelings of disapproval have ever grown. Especially when he watched Jiang Cheng lead an entire siege on Wei Ying. When he realized which parent Jiang Cheng clearly followed. And what exactly that parent had done to Wei Ying.

Lan Wangji gives a slightly amused huff, telling Lan Zhan, "He is complicated. You will realize with time..." he then adds with a firm gaze, "He is not his mother. Just like we are not our father,"

Lan Zhan inhales stiffly, glaring slightly at his older self, before yielding it. His eyes move towards the brothers when Jiang Wanyin's voice breaks the atmosphere, "How is he?"

Wei WuXian glances down for a brief moment, but Jiang Wanyin does not lift from the position. Wei WuXian does not stop the strokes of his hand on his shidi's head. He speaks, "Fine. There is no damage and his core is unharmed. The smaller bits of resentment are being cleansed naturally after I steadied his spiritual energy flow. Though its slower than usual, it will quicken naturally,"

Jiang Wanyin smiles, "Thank you,"

Lan Zhan furrows his eyebrows, confused. Why would Wei WuXian saving Wei Ying require such a genuine thanks? Were they not the same person? Would it not just be Wei WuXian saving his own...

Ah .

He had forgotten. Wei WuXian seemed to have no regards to live, nor seemed all too interested in helping Wei Ying live either. He had resigned himself to the fate he had. Believing himself to be at fault and the only way to fix everything was to remove himself from the situation. Permanently.

Wei WuXian had killed himself, after all. And before that, from the small bits they'd seen, he had already been thinking quite ill of himself. Lan Zhan knew Wei Ying was reckless, seeming to have no thoughts towards his own safety. Lan Zhan recalls the sight he had found Wei Ying in before the last viewing.

It hits him with a start that all this happens the next year of Wei Ying's life. That Wei Ying will kill himself in four years. That Wei Ying will start seeing himself as burdensome and useless even before that.

Lan Zhan was not pleased with the realization in the slightest.

Jiang Wanyin speaks up, "A-Jie yelled at her. I yelled at her. A-Die, Grandmaster, even Madam Jin,"

Wei WuXian's hand stills for a brief moment. The two Lans watch his expression tighten into hate and pain, before schooling back into the neutral calmness. The hand resumes its course.

"And?"

"She listened. A-Jie said what needed to be said and brought up things A-Niang always complained about. My strength, your family, A-Jie's choice of lifestyle, A-Die's silence," Jiang Wanyin explained, "She agreed to talk. Was willing to talk,"

Lan Wangji voiced up, "With the assumption Wei Ying will heed her voice at all,"

Jiang Wanyin lifted his head up. He had his own hands cover Wei WuXian's before resting his chin on them and letting his brother continue stroking his head, "I know...you and Shixiong should stay with them,"

"I have no desire to hear her words," Wei WuXian spoke up.

"Wei Ying," Lan WangJi called softly.

Wei WuXian shakes his head, "She's dead to me. Has been for far too long,"

"I do not want your younger self to be here alone," Jiang Wanyin confessed.

Lan Zhan mutters, "I could stay,"

He doesn't think they've heard him until they all turn to him and Lan Zhan finds his ears heating up. He puts up a hard mask, "You brought me here to help Wei Ying. I will help,"

Jiang Wanyin blinks twice, before laughing and fully straightening from the earlier position. He slowly rises to his feet, Wei WuXian giving him a small squeeze on the hands, before following him to standing. The Jiang sect leader teases, "Already in love Second Young Master?"

Lan Zhan glares, "Ridiculous!!"

"Ah, that's teenage Lan Zhan for *absolutely but I refuse to talk about it*," Wei WuXian translates with a small glint of amusement.

Lan Zhan glares harder. Lan WangJi chuckles, placing a hand on his younger self's shoulder, "You may stay,"

Lan Zhan releases a small hum then steps out of the touch and towards the bed. He stands over Wei Ying, glare melting away into his normal face, though his eyebrows are slightly furrowed and his lips are tilted downwards in a frown, “When will he wake?”

“When his mind wills him to,” Wei WuXian says.

Lan Zhan looks at him for a moment, trying to gauge an estimated time from the expression. His older self tells him, “Soon. Wei Ying is strong,”

Wei WuXian grumbles, “Not strong enough,”

He is promptly ignored except for the two stern looks he receives and Lan Zhan’s slight stare. Jiang Wanyin says, “Second Young Master Lan, please be patient with him. With what he has learned, I do not count on him being completely...stable,”

Lan Wangji then adds, “If he does seem that way, he is trying to deflect. He is trying to not worry you, others. Wei Ying despises worrying others,”

Wei WuXian pretends he doesn’t hear any of this. If it were in public, he might’ve protested or silenced both of them. But...this was Lan Zhan getting the information. He was not too opposed to Lan Zhan knowing this because Lan Zhan was one he trusts without fault. Someone who has always been good to him, someone who Wei WuXian believes he could depend on. Someone he is too selfish for to push away again.

“Here,” Jiang Wanyin says and waves his hand.

On the bedside table, a pair of black and red robes appear neatly folded. Lan Zhan understands at once, “For Wei Ying?”

“If he desires them,” Jiang Wanyin muttered, a resigned look in his eyes.

Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi glance at the robes, before looking at Jiang Wanyin with matching expressions. The sect leader says nothing, only glancing at Wei Ying, with soft yet sad eyes.

Lan Zhan, who hadn't caught the quick exchange, nods, before asking, "May I play for him?"

Wei WuXian answers this time, his eyes softening slightly, "That would be a good idea,"

Lan Zhan moves to the table and pulls out his qin. With gentle plucks of his fingers, the strings vibrate and produce a melody, the calming effects drifting to the room. Wei WuXian leaned into Lan WangJi, who took a gentle but secure hold on him. Jiang Wanyin breathed deeply, listening to the music and letting it take some of his stress away, even if for only a moment.

The four remain in silence until two gentle knocks sound at the door. Wei WuXian stares at the slab of wood before permitting, "Come in,"

The door opens slowly and the reveals Lan SiZhui with Jiang Yanli and Jiang Cheng. He smiles at them all, eyes straying to the younger version of his father for a few seconds as he said, "They were worried about Young Master Wei,"

Wei WuXian raises an eyebrow. Lan SiZhui moves to the side and Jiang Yanli steps in hesitantly. Following her is Jiang Cheng. Wei WuXian immediately catches the red around their eyes and his expression shifts, "You've cried. What's happened?"

The sentence makes the two Jiangs flinch slightly. Wei WuXian frowns and cannot stop himself taking a step forward, "Did something happen?"

"We're fine," Jiang Yanli sighs, giving a weak smile. Her eyes fall to look at Wei Ying, "Just...overwhelmed,"

Wei WuXian follows their eyes. A complicated expression takes over, before it breaks with a long exhale. Wei WuXian turns to Lan WangJi, “I want to go back,”

Lan WangJi’s expression is understanding. He nods, taking Wei WuXian’s hand in his own. Nodding to his younger self, the couple exit the room. Jiang Wanyin smiles at his sister and younger self. He hands his younger self a talisman, “Activate this when A-Xian wakes,”

“What is it?”

“A signal of such,” Jiang Wanyin explains vaguely, before tilting his head towards the robes, “Do not stop him. Do not, and I mean, do not–” he turns back to look at the two in purple “–stop him. Please, let him go if he wishes to,”

Jiang Yanli’s expression is pained, but she nods. Her brother does no such thing, only gritting his teeth and turning away. Jiang Wanyin stares at his younger self, knowing and feeling exactly what he was. He was a selfish man, selfish for affection. Denied of it by both his parents, his siblings were his home. His siblings were everything to him.

And yet...

Jiang Wanyin turns and exits the room, closing the door behind him.

The silence descends over those awake in the room. Lan Zhan blinks once before beginning to pluck the strings of the qin in front of him, beginning to play a new triade of songs. As the notes drift through the room once more, Jiang Yanli exhales and shakes her head lightly. With delicate steps, she makes her way to Wei Ying’s bed side and sits on the edge, gently reaching for his hand. She lets herself feel the steady flow of spiritual energy, the steady beating of his heart. Her eyes close softly and she tightens her grip.

Jiang Cheng hesitates, remaining standing in the center of the room. But his eyes are fixed on his brother– cousin– Wei Ying.

“A-Jie,”

“Hm?”

“...He’s not going to leave, right?”

Jiang Yanli opens her eyes.

Lan Zhan gives the heir a glance, before schooling his expression again.

Jiang Yanli looks at Wei Ying, “I don’t know, A-Cheng,”

“But—”

“A-Cheng,” Jiang Yanli smiles sadly, motioning him over.

Jiang Cheng grits his teeth before walking over and sitting down in the chair beside the bed. Jiang Yanli reaches over and takes Jiang Cheng’s hand in her own, giving it a firm squeeze, “A-Cheng, whatever happens, we need to be with him,”

“We will!”

“Then if A-Xian feels unable to stay at Lotus Pier, how could we stop him?”

“W-we’re fixing it...that’s what they said. A-Niang said she’d talk...” Jiang Cheng mutters, before wilting, “I...I don’t want him to go,”

Jiang Yanli grips tighter. She doesn't want Wei Ying to leave either...but she does not want to hurt him either. Well, she doesn't want to hurt him further than he already was. Her beautiful A-Xian; always so strong and selfless. How could she have been so blind? How could she have not seen the true extent of pain going on right in front of her?

She hopes she's wrong. But she doesn't think she is. And that makes it worse.

Jiang Yanli blinks her eyes slowly, staring at the sleeping face. Slowly, she raises her hands and brushes a loose strand of hair aside. She finds herself saying, "A-Xian will always be our A-Xian, our brother..." she adds after a moment, "Our cousin. He will always be family... and I wish we could let him heal with us, but I worry of the repercussion such a decision could have,"

"We can protect him! I won't kill him! A-Jie, I—"

"A-Cheng, that's not what I meant," She smiles lovingly at her didi, reaching out to fondly caress his hair, "We can protect him, of course we can. But A-Xian doesn't need our protection right now..."

She exhales softly, "The information we are being given, this advantage of the future...we shall harness it. We will ensure his safety,"

She glances over at Lan Zhan, giving him a friendly smile, "and the safety of those he loves,"

Lan Zhan's eyes widened a fraction, ears burning and the following string is plucked a bit too hard. Jiang Yanli giggles amused at the interaction of the second jade. A hand squeezes her own and Jiang Yanli turns around quickly, leaning over the male on the bed, "A-Xian?"

The atmosphere shifts and all attention is on the boy in bed. Wei Ying's nose scrunches a bit, eyebrows furrowing. Another soft sound hums from his throat. Jiang Yanli calls again, "A-Xian, are you awake?"

“Sh...shijie...” a soft and hoarse groan echoes out.

Wei Ying’s eyes crack open and he finds himself staring up at his two most favorite people. And yet, for a moment, the purple makes him flinch. He shuts his eyes, lifting a head and rubbing his forehead to ease the dull pain. When he reopens his eyes he stares up at the ceiling for a moment, before saying, “I had a nightmare...”

“What?” Jiang Cheng frowns.

“It has to be one...” Wei Ying mutters, “...all that...none if it's real...”

Lan Zhan finds himself plucking the strings harder and placing more spiritual energy in the notes. Wei Ying hears the qin and finally glances back to those in his room. He finds his shijie(tangjie?)...begging her, a sliver of pain slipping into his voice, “Please...please tell me none of it was real...the Madam...my parents...”

Jiang Yanli’s expression falls and Jiang Cheng flinches, turning away. Wei Ying knows it was not a dream from that alone. He exhales, covering his eyes and letting out a weak laugh, “Hah...”

A pause settles, no one knowing quite how to break it. Jiang Cheng, still faced away, pulls out the talisman, igniting it. He watches the paper disintegrate in his fingers, eyes straying towards the black and red robes.

‘ He looked nice in black and red,’ he thinks abruptly, *‘ Despite them being of low quality’*

Wei Ying’s voice cuts the silence, jolting Jiang Cheng from his thoughts, “This song is nice,”

Lan Zhan blinks and then informs, “It is *Song of Clarity* , a piece designed to calm the mind,”

Wei Ying turns, “Oh, Lan Zhan, your here too,”

“Mn,”

“Of course he's here,” Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, “Have you seen your elder counterparts?”

Wei Ying flushes, giggling softly. The delightful sound echoes and the three find themselves easing into the atmosphere. Wei Ying moves his arms over his head, stretching like a cat, rolling over until he's draped over Jiang Cheng's legs. The younger reacts immediately, “Don't cling to me!!”

“Ah but Jiang Cheng!!!” Wei Ying whines, “I'm an injured man!”

“If you can roll around and joke like this, you're well enough for me to break your legs!!” Jiang Cheng threatens trying to pull Wei Ying off, though the older just clings on tighter, smiling silly.

Jiang Yanli watches them with soft eyes, giggling at their display fondly. Lan Zhan watches the display silently judging them...yet, also a little curious. Such a display was foreign to him, aside from the occasional display he had seen between Nie Huaisang and Nie Mingjue. But their brotherhood was still different than Wei Ying's and Jiang Cheng's.

“A-Xian, don't move too much. A-Cheng be careful,” Jiang Yanli gently reminds them, however she cannot bring herself to add any sternness to her tone.

The display is so warm and familiar. She wishes it to remain like this. She wonders, briefly, if she'd ever get to see such a display again. There is no doubt that once they are finished here, they will all be different. A knock from the door has three of the four tensing. Wei Ying feels Jiang Cheng stiffen beneath him and his smile falls, “What's wrong?”

He glances at the door as it opens. Two adults in purple stand in the doorway, one with a tired and hesitant smile, and the other...blank. Wei Ying unlatches himself from Jiang Cheng, staring at Jiang Fengmian and Yu ZiYuan a number of emotions raging through him. Distantly, he hears Jiang Yanli, Jiang Cheng, and Lan Zhan, rise to bow in greeting.

He thinks the two sect leaders greeted back, but he has long since moved from the present time. His emotions are storming and the images of his parents dead bodies are swirling in his mind- his mother getting killed by the woman in front of him is *very clear* in his mind.

“A-Xian, how are you feeling?” He hears Jiang Fengmian ask him and he is now aware that the two have entered his room.

‘Answer’ he tries to tell himself.

He doesn’t.

His mouth doesn’t move. Wei Ying stares at Jiang Fengmian and for a moment, he really cannot recognize him. No, that’s not it. He doesn’t understand why he’s brought *her* here. Wei Ying’s eyes flick over to Yu ZiYuan and the silver hardens further.

Yu ZiYuan wasn’t looking at him and that angers him further. Everything in him feels like its fighting. He can feel his connection with suibian, the sword placed on his desk on the other end of the room. He can feel the sword vibrating and prepared to make damage. And he also feels any ounce of restraint and teachings he’s had being put to the test.

He had learned how to act around her, he knows how to avoid her ire. And yet, there is none of those feelings. All he wants is to yell and push at her. He *wants* her ire, he finds. He wants an excuse to fight her back. Because out of the two of them, he’s not the villain right now. Maybe in the future, but he hasn’t done anything near the level of crime she’d done.

His silence breaks first, “I’m great. I mean, as great as one can be after learning that their parents were killed by someone they’ve been around for the past six years,”

Yu ZiYuan flinches and Wei Ying feels a small sense of satisfaction. It dies when he’s suddenly facing a familiar scowl, “Watch your mouth! Is that how you speak to the people who save you off the streets?!”

'How dare—' Wei Ying glares at her. He kills the yell, keeping his voice at a level of restrained rage, "Saved me? You put me there,"

Yu ZiYuan's eyes widen for a moment before she clenches her jaw, fingers curling into fists. Jiang Yanli swallows, closing her eyes from hearing her A-Xian *fight back*, and Jiang Cheng stares at Wei Ying, heart dropping to his stomach at the same revelation. Jiang Fengmian shifts awkwardly, before clearing his throat and looking to Lan Zhan, "Second Young Master Lan, we will take our leave,"

"Mn," Lan Zhan bows.

"A-Cheng, A-Li," Jiang Fengmian says and the two nod, before turning to Wei Ying, who is staring at them all with wide eyes, "Why are you leaving?"

Jiang Yanli smiles kindly, "We have been told to not interfere," she then adds after a mental push, "Sandu Shengshou, left these robes for you should you choose to wear them,"

Wei Ying stares at the black and red robes. He doesn't know how to feel, nor does he know what expression he is making. Whatever it was, it made Jiang Yanli tighten her grip on his shoulder for a brief moment, before turning to leave the room. He watches them, before realizing that Yu ZiYuan had not moved to follow the other three in purple.

He is obtusely aware of what is about to happen. He glances to where Lan Zhan stands near his qin. They make eye contact and Lan Zhan speaks, "I will not be leaving,"

"Second Young Master Lan," Yu ZiYuan begins to object.

"I have been told to stay while you remain in the room to discuss," Lan Zhan informs her politely, though no one can ignore the obvious jab.

Lan Zhan is here because Yu ZiYuan shall not be alone with Wei Ying. Yu ZiYuan thinks the implication might hurt almost as much as the watching herself whip CangSe Sanren's child a year in the future.

"Discuss?" Wei Ying repeats, breathless from disbelief, before looking at Yu ZiYuan, "I don't want to discuss. I know enough,"

"You know nothing," She bites out.

Wei Ying frowns before laying down and turning away from her. Yu ZiYuan's anger flares and she just barely manages to kill the reflexive scream. She closes her eyes, forcing herself to breathe. It would do her no good to lose her temper, would it now? Afterall, her pride, what was her pride really worth anymore?

She had pretended not to see it's harm, but hearing it from her dear daughter, watching the boy with *her* smile wail in grief and betrayal...everything, seemed to throw her into the eye of the storm she had conjured.

Opening her eyes, she stares at Wei Ying's back. He's always looked more like Wei ChangZe, but to her, his smile and heartfelt laugh had always been a memory of *her*.

She walks forward, sitting on the edge of the bed. Wei Ying turns further away, pulling the cover around him tighter. Yu ZiYuan speaks without moving her eyes away from Wei Ying, "Second Young Master Lan, could you keep playing?"

Lan Zhan stares at her, before bowing and settling back in front of the guqin. He does a good attempt of pretending to not pay attention, but Yu ZiYuan knows better. She hesitates for a brief moment, unsure of how to start. She picks with the easiest, CangSe Sanren.

"Your mother and I first met when she came to Gusu with an invite to the lectures. I wouldn't have gone had it not been for my eldest sister. She had gotten an invite and thus, the sect leader at that time extended it to my er-jie and myself when we were of age," She stares off into the distance, but she is aware that she has the child's-- *and that's what he was, wasn't he?* -- attention.

“She was...bright, loud,” Yu ZiYuan lets out a soft laugh as the memories flow to the surface with a mix of pain and nostalgia, “clumsy. A walking mess,”

Her voice loses its hesitance and after a very long time, Yu ZiYuan feels the most attuned to herself than she had in almost a decade, “But she was beautiful and very talented. One may not have known she was the student of an immortal, but they would know she was skilled. For despite her inability to understand the way of sects, she was trying and she learnt fast. Back then, we’d refer to her like a light. She’d attract all sorts of things and once you noticed her, it was hard to forget,”

Wei Ying has never heard Yu ZiYuan sound the way she does now. She sounds...longing. As if she was reminiscing about a lost love.

He has never heard her—anyone—speak of his mother with such...fondness. His fury and hurt is stirring, but he stays still and silent, eyes fixed on the wall, but ears eagerly listening. For a moment, he can almost convince himself that what he has always wished has happened.

“Within the great sects, there was no female heir. But there were female nobility from other smaller sects like myself. Peizhi had joined me from Meishan, so the two of us had expected to room. But we didn’t. Instead, I roomed with CangSe, while Peizhi roomed with ShuFang, a young orphaned cultivator that CangSe had befriended,”

Yu ZiYuan pretends not to catch the startled pluck of strings from the side of the room. She thinks back to her time in Gusu, staying silent for a bit. She could say many things, but that was not what was supposed to speak of, was it? No, she owed an explanation, an apology. And to do so, she needed to accept the pain she had felt that day again. She swallows and continues, “I don’t know how the four of us clicked, how Peizhi and I clicked with those two,” Yu ZiYuan laughs at a fond memory of their personalities clashing, “It worked, somehow. We became very close and I trusted them with my life,” her face begins to harden as she ventures to the harder feelings, “I trusted CangSe-Jie with my life,”

Wei Ying inhales sharply and Yu ZiYuan glances at him, but he is still turned away from her. She is slightly grateful for it. She doesn’t think she could handle his expressions.

“After the lectures, it was harder to stay in touch. CangSe-Jie wandered, I think ShuFang might’ve joined her for a while. Peizhi and I occasionally joined them, sometimes Fengmian, ChangZe, YongZhen, HuiLang, Guangshan, and Ruohan joined us,” Yu ZiYuan glosses over those years, “Then she settled in Yunmeng for a while. For the few years she stayed, it was just me, her, ChangZe, and Fengmian. PeiZhi was busy with her own marriage arrangements. Mine were put on hold,”

Wei Ying stiffens and the slight calm that had settled as he listened to the memories began to fizzle. Here it was.

“When she told me ChangZe had confessed to her, and that she had reciprocated those feelings, I was happy for her. And yet I felt bitter,”

She pauses, seeing if he would speak. He does not and she sighs, “It was not because I knew what was coming with me in regards to Fengmian...” she tilts her head, “Not entirely,”

“...It...most of it was because I knew that I was about to lose the closest person to me,” Yu ZiYuan lets herself confess and she can feel her emotions begin to spiral, but she grips them. She had been doing well, she will not lose her temper. She will not.

“They never visited, you know,” She tells Wei Ying, “Never came back once they left. Just the letters,”

Yu ZiYuan wrinkles the fabric of her robes due to how tight she’s gripping them, “I remember when she told me about you after you had been born. She gushed in every letter, of her A-Ying,”

Wei Ying flinches beside her and Yu ZiYuan knows her mistake. She stares at him for a moment, before sighing, “WuXian...I am not telling you any of this to confuse you. I am not telling you this for any mercy, you may feel what you wish. You may resent me,” – *I hope you resent me,* – “I am not telling you this to fix things, its not going to fix things,”

Yu ZiYuan swallows her pride, closing her eyes and thinking of a beautiful woman with silver eyes and a laugh that had become the Violet Spider’s favorite song. Yu ZiYuan

whispers, “When I killed her, when I realized what I had done, I had never wished to die more. Hurting your mother was one thing I wished to never do,”

“...did you search?”

It’s the first words he’d spoken to her the entire time. It was so unexpected that she opened her eyes in shock, glancing at him. He’s not looking at her still.

“...I did,”

She adds after a moment, “I looked but I could not find you,”

“If you had...” Wei Ying says, “If you had found me, what would you have done?”

The answer is obvious to her, but she says it as if it’s shameful, “Bring you back to Lotus Pier,”

Wei Ying lets out a small laugh, it’s mocking and pained, “Then why have you been trying to get rid of me?”

She doesn’t answer. Does not know how. She wants to scream at him, slightly. Give out the reasons she had always said. But she kept her mouth shut because such things were excuses. Yes, she hated it when her children were ignored, but that anger was towards Jiang Fengmian. It was not supposed to be at *him*. Her anger...her grief and love...should never have been directed at Wei Ying.

And yet...it had been.

Yu ZiYuan smiles pathetically, “Your mother will kill me when I die. Not for killing her, though I wish she would. She’d kill me for channeling everything to you,”

Wei Ying is surprised at the admission of guilt. He bites his lip and turns very slowly, looking up to take in Yu ZiYuan's expression. He thinks it's the most human, the most real, he's ever seen her. He is angry at her, he thinks he always will be. He thinks that a part of him will always hate her for everything. But that is in the future. Right now, he despises her with every cell of his body, yet also can understand...and that hurts him. How could he dare to sympathize with her, her who killed his own mother? Who had been yelling terrible things of his parents for years? Who had yelled at Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli terrible things? Who had hurt other people because of her own faults?

"These years...have you ever regretted anything?"

It's a heartless question but Yu ZiYuan takes the sword without a fight. She turns, expecting to see his hair again, but is taken aback by the bright silver. She stares at him, taking in the expression of numbness, yet also pain. She doesn't look away when she answers, "...I have,"

His expression tightens and Yu ZiYuan has a feeling he doesn't believe her.

"Why..." he trails off.

There are too many whys.

She blinks softly, turning away, "I loved your mother. I love my children. Once, I would have loved you..."

She doesn't let him think further before adding, "But such a word cannot be thrown in the Jiang Sect freely..."

She looks at the clarity bell on her waist. The words and sounds of the past echo in her mind. She can almost hear the teasing song of CangSe Sanren, can almost see that *beautiful* smile.

“I am sorry...” She whispers, a quiet thing. A shameful thing. Yet...sincere, “for deriving you of that love,”

Wei Ying thinks he’s crying again. His chest feels tight and his head hurts. He turns away to not show her the effect of her words. He believes she noticed anyway.

Yu ZiYuan stands slowly, looking straight ahead. She turns after a moment of thought. Then before she could hesitate she reaches over and runs a hand through the teenagers hair.

Wei Ying freezes.

She whispers, “When we return, if you so wish, I will go with you to their graves to retrieve their items,”

Her hand is gone from his head and he listens as she walks away. He listens as the door opens and shuts. He listens to the slow stop of zither notes. He listens to himself break into sobs, before attempting to silence them.

“Wei Ying,”

‘Lan Zhan...’

Lan Zhan hesitates before the words of those from the future, of the things his future self had told him, ring in his head.

“Do not hesitate to reach out. I know there are rules, I know we have never been one for touch...but for him, please. Reach first, or meet him halfway,”

“Wei Ying is a bright person, do not mistake this. But he is human. He is human and he feels strongly. His pain has been left unshared for years. It is not a weakness, though he might presume. He is very strong, but even the strongest men cry,”

“Wei Ying, I am here...”Lan Zhan said, reaching forward and thinking of what his older self had done.

It’s weird, it feels weird, but when he pulls Wei Ying into his arms, he knows he’s done the right thing by the way the younger one turns into him, gripping the white robes. Lan Zhan keeps a firm yet not bruising grip on Wei Ying, repeating the words “I am here” and “let it out”. Two sentences his older self had said were grounding, not just for Wei Ying, but anyone in such a scenario.

Wei Ying grips tighter, sobbing until the volume quiets down into sniffles and hiccups. Lan Zhan had subconsciously began to rock a bit, something his mother did when he was child. He didn’t realize he was doing it until Wei Ying whispered, “Thank you...”

“What?”

“Thank you...I’m sorry about your robes,” Wei Ying sniffles, pulling back and Lan Zhan regrets letting go the moment they’re apart.

“That is of no matter,” Lan Zhan states.

A silence descends for a moment. Lan Zhan shifts before asking awkwardly, “How...how does Wei Ying feel?”

Wei Ying looks down, “I feel like I want to kill her...but I also feel closer to her than ever before,”

He lets out a laugh, “God, I’m pathetic...”

“Wei Ying is not pathetic,”

“You’re too nice, Lan Zhan,” Wei Ying smiled weakly, “but I’m very pathetic. I don’t...I’m just...I don’t know what I’m feeling, but I know that I’m furious...”

He looks at Lan Zhan, exclaiming, “I mean- how could she?! How could any of them!? My parents didn’t do anything!! Hell, Madam Yu was so close to my Mama!! And yet all these years she’s...shes...”

Lan Zhan, in his defense, doesn’t have anything to say. He doesn’t know how to comfort Wei Ying, what to tell him. He settles for actions instead, reading over and holding Wei Ying’s hand.

The head disciple looks at him and Lan Zhan holds the gaze, “Wei Ying does not have to forgive, frankly, this one does not know how one could ever forgive in such a situation...Wei Ying does not need to know how to feel, nor how he feels. Wei Ying does not owe anyone answers. Wei Ying may rest, take time, and feel...” He tightens his grip, “I...I will be here, if Wei Ying so wishes,”

“Lan Zhan, you...” Wei Ying whispered, “I thought you hated me...”

Lan Zhan knows that’s his fault. He looks away, “...sorry,”

He adds after a moment, “Did not hate you...”

Wei Ying blinks at him before smiling. Lan Zhan feels his throat dry at the sight. It’s a sweet smile, not like his big and bright ones. Wei Ying’s eyes are slightly red and there’s still reminiscences of tears flowing down the slightly pink cheeks.

Lan Zhan had never seen a more beautiful sight.

Wei Ying leans carefully into Lan Zhan’s space. When the other doesn’t pull away or tense, he commits fully, leaning against the older. Lan Zhan stares at him, a silent question. Wei Ying doesn’t know the answer so he stays silent.

His eyes stray to black and red robes again. He knows what it would mean to wear them... what it would like. But, Wei Ying can't find a big reason to care. He doesn't want to wear this uniform, not right now.

Lotus Pier has been his haven for a years...but it is the home of those who took away his. His feelings are confused. It might be mostly betrayal, Wei Ying isn't quite sure if this is what it feels like. He thinks it might be. The cross of anger and pain, of grief and love, of regret and hate.

“Do you want to wear them?”

Wei Ying blinks, before he whispers, “I do,”

Neither of them move for a few minutes more. Only when Wei Ying feels a little more in touch with reality and his emotions does he get up. Lan Zhan watched as he picked up the robes and walking behind the privacy screen. The jade remains in place before moving to pick up his qin. When it's on his back once more, Wei Ying steps from behind with a soft call, “Lan Zhan,”

Lan Zhan turns and he stared at the sight. Wei Ying looks the same, but there is something about the black and red robes that fit right. Lan Zhan nods, “You look good,”

He is rewarded with a flushed Wei Ying who whines about his “poor heart” while grabbing Suibian. The two exit the room and head back towards the hall. Lan Zhan notices the clarity bell—Wei Ying's father's clarity bell. He doesn't know much about them, and he wonders if they're like the Lan forehead ribbons. He makes a note to inquire...someone about this. Maybe Wei Ying.

Lan Zhan knocks twice out of courtesy before the two open the doors to the swords hall. All eyes turn to them, before flickering to Wei Ying. Wei Ying breaks into a grin, “I got a robes from the future!”

Lan Zhan blinks at the sudden change. He doesn't get to ponder before Wei Ying gasps, “Wait! Sandu Shengshou, how did you know these robes would fit me anyway?”

Jiang Wanyin knows what his brother is doing. He lets him do it and rolls his eyes, “I have a daughter. Eyeballing a robe size is a skill I’ve mastered,”

Wei Ying laughs skipping forward and throwing an arm around Jiang Cheng, “You hear that! You’re going to master the art of fashion for your kid!”

Jiang Cheng flushes before protesting, “Shut up! I bet you learnt something to!”

Wei Ying looks at Wei WuXian, “Hm? Did I?”

Wei WuXian gives a look at the four juniors, “Patience,”

The four boys all make varying sounds of offense. Nie Huaisang breaks into laughter, following quickly by others. Wei Ying and Wei WuXian meet eyes across the hall, nodding, *‘Goal reached,’*

Lan Wangji clears his throat, “Let us resume?”

“What are we going to do now?” Jin Zixuan asks.

“How about something good? As like a small break?” Jiang Wanyin mumbles sheepishly.

“Like Senior Wei and Hanguang Jun!!!” Ouyang Zizhen cheered.

“Huh?” Wei Ying and Lan Zhan perk up.

“Hm, why not? A little brief intro,” Wei WuXian smiles at his husband.

Lan WangJi smiles back, “Mn. I agree,”

“Wait a sec- what does that mean?” Wei Ying questioned but was ignored.

“Yesss!!! We get to watch Hanguang Jun and Senior Wei’s story!!!” Lan JingYi exclaimed.

“But first—“ Grandmaster Lan says, “I believe it’s only appropriate for A-Xian and WangJi to sit beside each other...in both times,”

The younger of the two flush. Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi smile amused. However, neither Wei Ying or Lan Zhan move, just staring blankly at one another.

So of course, Jiang Wanyin moves them with a flick of his hand, ignoring Wei Ying startled squawk as he is suddenly rearranged. Now, he sits on the side of the hall, beside Lan Zhan. Lan Xichen smiles, “Welcome Young Master Wei,”

“Brother!”

Wei WuXian laughs softly, before settling between his husband and brother. His one hand glows red and he takes Lan WangJi’s hand with the other. Lan WangJi’s own free hand is already glowing blue with spiritual energy. The two share a gaze of love, before letting out the energy in sync.

The array glows to life and the surroundings dim to highlight the stage.

The purple hues of YunmengJiang’s swordhall fall away as the conjured image reveals much lighter and softer tones of white and blue. They are projected the image of a building, a white-pebbled path leading up to the wooden stairs and front deck.

“This is...?” Jin ZiXuan asked.

“The jingshi,” Lan Xichen informed, “WangJi’s quarters,”

At his words, the view shifts slightly to follow the back of a tall man, the gusulan forehead ribbon cascading through his hair and the whites of his robes fluttering elegantly with every step. Another shift reveals the face of Lan WangJi as he enters into the jingshi.

The inside is as one would expect, undeniably Lan WangJi. Neat shelves, whites and blues, a designated place for books and his qin. However, there is more than just Lan WangJi.

The clutter of parchment on the table, a few thrown robes here and there. They half-expect Lan WangJi to clean, but he seems as if he hadn’t even noticed the eye-grabbing mess, eyes looking around as he ventured deeper into his quarters. His eyes steady onto another door at the back of the jingshi.

Lan Zhan furrows his eyebrows, “What is that?”

Lan WangJi looks confused for a moment, before he recalls such a door does not exist in the jingshi of his younger self, “Ah, that is the door to the back. I had it built,”

Lan Zhan stares, but nods. He doesn’t quite get why he would build such a thing, but he has a feeling the answer will be revealed eventually.

Lan WangJi slides open the back door, stepping outside once again.

“Oh my,” Jiang Yanli breathes out at the lovely back area.

Lan Qiren blinks, “It’s...it’s very nice,”

Wei Ying looks to where a pond is settled, boarded by large polished stones. The water is clear and Wei Ying thinks there might be some fish in it, but he doesn't see any. He is more focused on the sprouts of green and pink. The undeniable presence of lotuses.

"You have a lotus pond," Jiang Cheng sees it as well.

Lan Zhan thinks he knows why he built a back area now. Nie Huaisang giggles, giddy, "You built a lotus pond for Wei-Xiong!!!"

Lan Zhan flushes red at his ears, checking Wei Ying, who is blushing pink, but also staring at the scene with wonder.

He moves back to look at the projection when the view shifts to focus on a young man in casual red under robes, an untied and much too large set of white robes slung over his shoulder. His hair is tied up loosely, clearly not much effort in appearance. He sits not too far from the lotus pond, hair blowing with the soft echoes of wind, a brush in his hand and a pad with parchment on it settling on his lap.

"Oh..." Wei WuXian squeaks staring at himself on the screen. A version so different than now.

Lan Wangji smiles at the scene and says, "Wei Ying looks nice,"

They haven't even started but Wei Ying has already blushed red.

Jiang Yanli smiles at the sight of her brother. He looks carefree, relaxed...at peace. Something she has never seen before.

Wei WuXian looks up as Lan Wangji walks closer. A smile breaks, and everyone softens at the pure joy and light such an expression emits, "Lan Zhan! You're back!"

Lan Zhan can't tear his eyes away from the picture.

He is almost angry when the projection switches to show them both, taking away full focus from the smile.

“Mn,” Lan WangJi settles on the grass and Wei WuXian shifts over so he is leaning into the taller's side.

Lan WangJi wraps an arm gently around his waist, shutting his eyes for a moment as he leans his head onto Wei WuXian's.

Lan Xichen exhales at the content he sees in his brother. He breaks into an amused smile as Ouyang Zizhen bounces in his seat, “They're so cute!!!”

“Zizhen...” Wei WuXian chastised fondly.

“Look!” Wei WuXian says, showing the parchment, “I finally figured out how to fix the teleportation talisman!”

Lan WangJi looks at the parchment, a multitude of scribbles and sigils on it. He prompts his beloved to explain further, “I was not completely aware of a problem with them?”

Wei WuXian sighs fondly, “There's no problem with them. They work completely fine, but to use one takes such a tremendous amount of spiritual energy, that to, its only ever limited to the use of very powerful cultivators like my Hanguang Jun. Its such a waste of such a tool! What's the point of making the perfect talisman for emergencies, when one barely is able to use it without completely depleting themselves of energy!?!”

“That's right!!” Nie MingJue agrees.

“The teleportation talisman is a powerful one though,” Madam Jin points out, “To perfectly transport yourself from one point to the next with just a parchment...of course, using such energy is required,”

“Mn,”

“So obviously, I looked at it! And I even read books about what I could find in the library. Huaisang sent me some archives too, but they weren’t as helpful as the Lan Sect’s history notes. Anyway, look, you see this sigil here in the original talisman? It’s the one that burns up spiritual energy, it’s common in a lot of talisman but is usually overwritten by other key sigils. We write it without thinking about it. I made the spirit-attracting flags by simply adding four strokes to a spirit-warding talisman, so we know that one simple stroke can change things. I mean, obviously, for such a complicated talisman that’s not the case but my point stands! I took the talisman and wrote it out as I always have, while also deconstructing it onto a separate piece of parchment so I can truly analyze every sigil. Look, some of these I didn’t even recognize!! This sigil right here, this is connecting to the sigil that burns spiritual energy. It’s an amplifier. So of course, I took that out and checked how it fared alone and just how much it amplified the talisman, and I realized it was quite essential, yet also the source of the problem! So, instead of switching things around, I went with creating a new talisman from scratch, you’ve seen me work on it for weeks now, but I finally figured out how to balance the consumption of spiritual energy and the energy needed to perform the task. Humans have a natural abundance of spiritual and resentful energy, cultivators are more susceptible to energy as they’ve attuned their bodies to detect it. And since talisman can only really be used by cultivators, well a talisman of this feat, I decided to use that to work with me. So, instead of just using a cultivator’s spiritual energy, I removed a few unneeded symbols and added this sigil which is common in tracking talisman. It’s used to sense spiritual or resentful energy in an area, depending on the corresponding sigils it’s around. I added it here so now, the talisman takes in natural spiritual energy from around the area. That’s the primary function, but I also am going to embed it so it can take resentment energy out of the air too, just in case there’s a situation where there is no spiritual energy! But it worked!! I finally did it!”

The silence of the room was mostly just stunned.

Half were still trying to process, the others were just shocked at how Wei WuXian discussed the changing of a talisman so powerful as if it were a common play.

“...so this is why Huaisang was able to pass this year,” Nie MingJue breaks the silence.

Nie Huaisang exclaimed, “DA-GE?!”

Jiang Fengmian stared at Wei WuXian, “That’s...oh my god,”

“I didn’t even know you could...mess with talisman to improve efficiency?” Jin ZiXuan furrowed his eyebrows.

Wei Ying hums softly, looking at his older self, “But wouldn’t taking the energy out of the environment be risky? After all, if near a spirit, wouldn’t the resentment energy be dangerous?”

“That’s why you test your talisman and keep tweaking them until it works,” Wei WuXian nods, “But also no, its only dangerous should the energy directly affect you. Cultivators are not made to harness resentment, that is not to say they couldn’t. Directing the resentment into the talisman creates both a conduit and a shield,”

“Ah...” Wei Ying understands, before blinking at realizing everyone was staring at him, “What?”

Nie MingJue speaks again, “Young Master Wei, would you like to teach at Nie Sect?”

“Now, now, MingJue,” Lan Xichen smiles, “Young Master Wei would make more sense for him to teach with the Lan,”

“You’ll have his genius when he marries! My sect needs some fresh minds and Huaisang needs a tutor,”

“Da-Ge!!!”

Jiang Cheng kills an angry snap in his throat. If his brother should teach, shouldn't it be for the Jiang Sect? The sentence reminds him of earlier events and he wilts slightly, sighing.

Wei Ying flushed in embarrassment, "Can we focus again?"

Lan WangJi smiled at Wei WuXian through his rambles, watching him with soft eyes. When Wei WuXian finished, he beamed and Lan WangJi was weak to resist kissing his forehead, "Well done,"

The sincerity of the praise makes Wei Ying swallow a lump in his throat.

Wei WuXian giggled, before tilting his head up and saying, "You look relaxed. A good day?"

"A very good day," Lan WangJi agreed.

"Oh?" Wei WuXian raised an eyebrow, "What happened?"

Lan WangJi didn't respond for a moment. He looked at Wei WuXian, searching for something. Then, he exhales and looks ahead, towards the pond. The sky above them was a light orange and pink, the hues causing the gold of Lan WangJi's eyes to almost glow.

"Wei Ying...are you happy here?"

Wei Ying jolts slightly at the question.

His actions are echoed by the Wei WuXian on the projection.

Wei WuXian looks shocked by the question and for a moment, he is only staring at Lan WangJi. The older glances back hearing no answer. It is only after their eyes meet, does Wei WuXian blink and smile softly, “Of course. I’m happy with you,”

Lan WangJi smiled for a second, before it dropped, “That is not what I meant,”

A few confused expression bubble around the circle. Lan WangJi and Jiang Wanyin both force themselves to keep their mouths shut from reacting.

“Hm?”

“Here. Cloud Recesses, the Lan Sect...are you happy here?”

Wei WuXian blinks softly. He then laughs, a gentle thing and turns to look towards the pond, “You are here, A-Yuan is here, I am perfectly content,”

“Wei Ying...”

“I am fine,”

“But not happy,”

Wei Ying blinks in shock. He can read himself, he knows how nothing he had said was a lie. But also, it wasn't the full truth. And no one has been able to quite see it, he doesn't think anyone has ever been able to read past his words which answer everything, and yet nothing.

So how does he, Lan Zhan, Lan WangJi, know?

Wen Qing furrows her eyebrows, “How could you tell?”

Lan WangJi moves to speak, but Wei WuXian rests a hand on his knee, shaking his head softly. He does not want to deal with that yet. Not now.

“Lan Zhan...” Wei WuXian sighs, “It’s not...I am fine. I am content, very very happy with you,”

“I know you are happy with me,” Lan WangJi turns, “But I wish for Wei Ying to be happy, truly happy...I want you to feel safe,”

“Lan Zhan...” Wei WuXian muttered helplessly, a wry smile on his lips, “Safety is such a delicate thing. In time, I will know this place as well as I know Lotus Pier,”

Lan WangJi’s face tightened, “I do not wish for Cloud Recesses to be another lotus pier to you,”

Wei Ying thinks there’s an implication that he’s missing.

Jiang Cheng scowls, “What does that mean?!”

Lan WangJi gave a look, “What do you believe it could mean?”

“Lan Zhan,” Wei WuXian scolds his husband and the older relents.

“Aiyo, Lan Zhan,” Wei WuXian exhales. He asks after a moment, “Why are you asking me such a question?”

Lan WangJi turns fully to face him. They stare at one another, before Lan WangJi reaches over and holds Wei WuXian’s hands gently. He stares softly at Wei WuXian, breathing gently, “I...”

He blinks and says, “Wei Ying, I love you...”

Nie Huaisang and Ouyang Zizhen may or may not have squealed.

Wei Ying and Lan Zhan go red.

Wei WuXian flushes slightly at the serious declaration, before smiling, “I love you too, Lan Zhan,”

Lan WangJi reaches one hand up to brush a few strands of loose hair out of Wei WuXian’s face, “This one wishes to love Wei Ying until his heart can no longer beat for Wei Ying,”

“EEK-” Wei Ying covers his face, curling into a flushed ball.

“Oh my god!!!” Lan JingYi screams.

“Jingyi- Jingyi- stop shaking me!” Jin Ling complains.

Wei WuXian’s face breaks into shock as the blush deepens. Lan WangJi continues, “I have lived a time where you were gone...a time where I never got to see you smile, never got to hear you laugh, never could feel your presence,”

The earlier heat of embarrassment dwindles to something delicate and soft. There is the sudden reminder to them all that the loving couple in front of them had been torn apart. Twice.

Wei Ying lowers his hands, frowning worriedly.

Grandmaster Lan swallows, looking down at the ground.

“Lan Zhan...”

“Wei Ying, when I found you, again. I promised, I promised myself I would never lose you again...even if you didn’t return my feelings, I had never dared wish for something as selfish. Even if you didn’t return my feelings, I would have protected you, and cared for you, and loved you,” Lan WangJi tells him.

Wei WuXian has tears building in his eyes, “Lan Zhan...what...”

Wei Ying doesn’t know where this is going, but he really hopes it gets there soon, because he might be unable to stop himself from trapping Lan Zhan in a hug as he sobs again.

“Wei Ying, this place is not somewhere you would call home, I know such a thing is fragile,” Lan WangJi smiles, “But I want to build a home with you. I want to wake up with you by my side for the rest of my life, I want to show the world how much I love you,”

“I’m gonna cry,” Ouyang Zizhen sniffled.

“I never thought Lan WangJi would be so...romantic,” Jin ZiXuan spoke out everyone’s thoughts.

Lan Qiren has not said anything, because he is franky to caught up in the genuineity he feels from this projection. From his nephew.

A tear hits Wei WuXian’s cheek.

Lan WangJi swallowed, looking down, “This one wishes to ask Wei Ying for permission,”

“Pe- Permission?” Wei WuXian repeats.

“Permission to stay. Permission to build a home, a permanent home,” Lan WangJi looks into Wei WuXian’s eyes, “Permission to call Wei Ying husband,”

“OH MY GOD ITS THEIR MARRIAGE PROPOSAL!!!” Ouyang Zizhen screamed.

Nie Huaisang gave a dramatic cry, “This is beautiful– Lan-Xiong–”

Wei Ying chokes, flushing deeply. Jiang Yanli bows towards Lan WangJi at the center of the room, “Thank you for taking care of A-Xian,”

“Mn,” Lan WangJi bows his head back.

Yu ZiYuan finds herself cracking a small smile at every teenager losing their minds over the couple. She finds Madam Jin and Jiang Fengmian watching with similar looks of amusement.

Jiang Wanyin gives an approving smile, before nodding to Lan WangJi, “Hm, I approve,”

Lan WangJi gives him a dry look, that clearly speaks, *‘I did not need your approval’* .

Wei WuXian pretends to not see the exchange. There is no blush on his cheeks for he knows the conversation is far from over, remembers this day clearly.

Wei WuXian’s eyes widen and tears fall rapidly. He is silent, as if collecting his thoughts. He finally matters a weak, “Lan Zhan...”

Then a watery smile makes his way onto his face, “Even if I dared to agree, your sect hates me. They would never allow someone so wonderful as you to wed this lowly rat,”

And that happiness falls flat.

“What...” Wen Qing mutters.

“You...you...” Lan Qiren began, but then Lan Wangji stops him sharply, “Please listen to the whole conversation,”

Lan Zhan blinks, frowning at the words of self depreciation. Wei Ying perks slightly, seeing perfect reason.

Lan Wangji scolds, “Wei Ying is no rat. He is a wonderful star,”

Wei WuXian opens his mouth, but Lan Wangji speaks first, “And as for my elders... they have agreed,”

Wei WuXian goes still, “What?”

The disbelief makes Grandmaster Lan flinch discreetly.

Madam Jin abruptly recalls, “...right...the elders had given you two eight months to prepare an entire wedding,”

Then his face turns worried, “Lan Zhan...Lan Zhan what did you do? Please tell me you didn’t get punished, Lan Zhan what—”

“Wei Ying,” Lan Wangji stops him, “Nothing like that...I assure you,”

It's alarming to know that is where Wei WuXian's mind strayed to. Jiang Fengmian frowns, "Qiren..."

Lan Qiren doesn't answer, staring at the projection with a hard face.

Lan Zhan frowns and speaks up, "Punish me for asking to marry? That..."

Is too similar to his parents situation. He looks to his older self, "You said he wasn't--"

"He's not," Lan WangJi assures.

"What are you talking about?" Wei Ying frowned.

Lan Zhan just shakes his head, while Lan Xichen gives him a look of worry.

"I have asked for some time, constantly. They finally agreed," Lan WangJi explains. He pulls out a parchment from his sleeve, a blue ribbon tying it.

Wei WuXian takes it and opens it up. A sob breaks as he looks at the official seal of the Lan sect. He rolls the paper up, looking at Lan WangJi, "Lan Zhan...you're too good for me,"

"Nothing is too good for Wei Ying,"

"But this is!" Wei WuXian cries, shifting to his knees and cupping Lan WangJi's face, "Don't you understand, my love? Already, I have ruined you, the scars on your back, the tension of the internal affairs, this beautiful love of ours. To marry will be a step you can never undo...it'd be a permanent stain here...I..."

Jiang Wanyin frowns deeply.

“Senior Wei...” Lan JingYi whines, “You’re not...you’re not a stain, or anything bad! You’ve made Gusu so much better!”

“Yes, yes! The GusuLan Sect should be honored!” Jin Ling agrees.

It hurts, Jiang Yanli realizes. Hurts to see her A-Xian’s pain. Such an extent that he will go so far to deny himself of something any of them can see he wants. Would go as far as convincing Lan WangJi to reconsider.

“I don’t care about my reputation,” Lan WangJi says, “You have not ruined me. Wei Ying has made me feel more alive than I have ever felt before, more human than ever,”

Lan Xichen thinks there’s more to that sentence. He feels a seed of doubt and worry in his heart once more.

Wei WuXian sobbed, “I-I’m messy...I throw things around, I can’t sleep well, I have nightmares, I hurt people, Lan Zhan. I dont want to hurt you...Please, please, I’m too selfish to deny you of this, so im begging you...”

Wei Ying swallows. He had hurt Lan Zhan...

Afterall, Lan Zhan had died like everyone else Wei Ying had grown close to.

Lan WangJi only smiles.

Wei WuXian sniffles, “I...I...I’m a menace, I bring trouble wherever I go,”

Yu ZiYuan flinches.

“I will go where the trouble is,” Lan WangJi has not broken his smile.

Wei WuXian’s protests become weaker, “You fell in love with the bright head disciple, you realized you were in love when I had already become a monster. Lan Zhan...I am a shell of the kid you loved. I...I’m never going to be good enough, I have never been good enough,”

“Oh, A-Xian,” Jiang Yanli whimpers, looking at her brother who was silent and staring at the screen with a multitude of emotions. Her call makes him look at her. She promises, “You have always been enough, A-Xian. More than enough,”

Wei Ying’s eyes widen and he almost thinks he’ll cry again.

Lan WangJi reached up, wiping a few tears and cupping Wei WuXian’s face. He leans up, pressing their lips softly together, before pulling back and whispering in a tone filled with devotion, “You are bright and as good as the day I first saw you,”

Wei Ying kills a sob, it comes out more as a strangled gasp. It makes eyes turn to him, but he does not acknowledge them. Lan Zhan is staring at him from the side, concerned.

Wei Ying doesn’t know when he was able to see the concern.

Wei WuXian hugs Lan WangJi tight, crying into his shoulder.

Lan WangJi hugs him back, “Wei Ying...will you marry me?”

The younger laughs weakly, “Yes, yes, I will,”

Lan WangJi smiles a bit wider, closing his eyes and hiding his face in Wei WuXian's shoulder.

It is only then does the sudden sound of gentle music waft through the room and the scene fade out.

“Shit—” Jiang Cheng cursed, “I forgot about that,”

“Huaisang, are you crying?” Jin ZiXuan points out.

Nie Huaisang sniffles, “They’re so in love,”

“Dajiu, dajiu! Was that really how it went?” Jin Ling asks.

“Of course, this thing hasn’t lied once,” Wei WuXian says.

“You know,” Lan SiZhui suddenly speaks, “I was half expecting A-Die’s and Baba’s song to play, but I do not recognize this tune,”

Its a lovely song, highpitched and almost like bells. There is something delicate, yet bright about the atmosphere the music invokes.

“Their song?” Wen Ning asks.

“Oh. Baba wrote a song for A-Die. It’s how Baba recognized A-Die when he came back to life, A-Die played that specific song...” Lan SiZhui pauses before adding, “Though, A-Die didn’t know where he had heard the song due to him being high with fever at the time. He also didn’t remember the name...”

Jiang Wanyin suddenly speaks, “Why is that the two times WangJi confessed and the time A-Xian confessed, A-Xian was an inch away from death?”

“If you find an answer, please let us know,” Lan Wangji deadpans.

The scene shifts to show a bustling street. They are focused on Lan WangJi, who is looking alarmingly helpless as he stares down at a young child wrapped around his leg and crying.

Lan Xichen doesn’t catch his laugh in time.

Wei Ying can’t help but giggle at the scene, ‘*Cute,*’

Lan WangJi, looks pomrpty embarrassed, “Oh no,”

“Oh yes!” Wei WuXian smiles widely, “A-Yuan, why don’t you take a guess who that kid is?”

Lan SiZhui already has an idea, his cheeks pink with shame.

***‘Maybe it’s the way you say my name,’* Lan WangJi’s voice sings softly.**

On cue, the call of, “Lan Zhan!” echoes and Lan WangJi looks up.

They are shown Wei WuXian, in black and red robes and a flute at his side, smile as his walks through the crowd. There is a look of shock and slight happiness in Lan WangJi’s face at the sight of–

“Oh my god,” Wen Qing realizes first, “I can read your expressions perfectly, I was not able to do that before,”

It is then the others realize the same. Yes, they had seen Lan WangJi be expressive, but his normal face was still hard to dissect. Yet now, it seemed like they could understand perfectly.

“Wa- I can too?” Jin ZiXuan blinks.

Lan Zhan does not know how to feel about this development.

‘Maybe it’s the way you play your game,’

The scene shifts and they’re met with a younger Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian. The latter is propped on an open window grinning as he holds up two rabbits. Lan WangJi is staring at him a mix of awe and annoyance.

“Er-gege, im wounded,” Wei Ying finds himself saying, obviously he’s been tame for too long, “I gave you such a gift and you’re staring at me like that,”

Lan Zhan gives him a look, “I kept them,”

Wei Ying’s teasing ends as he screams, “You kept them?!!”

“You did what??” Lan Qiren turned towards his nephew.

His nephew who very firmly states, “Not pets. They live freely. WangJi just ensures their safety and health,”

Nie Huaisang is appalled by this new side of Lan Zhan. Madam Jin tries and fails to hold back her laughter. Lan Qiren gives her a glare.

‘But it’s all good,’

The scene now projects the two sitting in a dark cave. They’re still young, Wei WuXian is still in the purple robes of YunmengJiang, yet neither have their swords. Wei WuXian grabs two planks of wood, placing them on the sides Lan WangJi’s leg. He then looks around, before his eyes go up to Lan WangJi and without hesitation he reaches forward to pull the forehead ribbon off.

Lan WangJi slams his hand to keep the ribbon in place, golden eyes furious, “You—”

“Wei WuXian!!!” Lan Qiren yells.

“Uh...present?” Wei Ying says, “I’m confused,”

Lan Zhan looks at Wei Ying, dryly, “How many times did you copy the GusuLan rules when you were at Cloud Recesses?”

Wei Ying gapes, betrayed, “I copied them until I nearly died! Lan Zhan, there no such thing about the ribbon!”

Lan Zhan sighed. Wei WuXian smiled sheepishly, “In my defense, I have all the rules memorized except that one. I really never recalled it,”

“You memorized them?” Lan Qiren stares at him.

“Of course, even death couldn’t get rid of those things,” Wei WuXian admits.

“Really, all it did was help you find loopholes,” Jiang Wanyin rolled his eyes.

Lan Wangji smiles, albeit proud, “Wei Ying is very smart,”

Lan Qiren thinks his nephew is possessed.

“I am also a bit confused,” Jiang Yanli politely speaks up.

“Ah, Maiden Jiang, our forehead ribbons are—”

“SiZhui, don’t tell them,” Jiang Wanyin stops, “Let him figure it out,”

“Jiang Cheng!!!”

“What? Is losing your leg really more important than your ribbon right now?” Wei WuXian challenges him and Lan Wangji clenches his jaw, before relenting.

“Lose his leg?” Lan Xichen caught.

“After the burning of cloud recesses, the wen sect took wangji and a few other lan disciples to Qishan for the indoctrination,” Grandmaster Lan explained, “Wangji’s leg did not get to heal until he and A-Xian were trapped in this cave,”

“Why were they trapped?” Jiang Fengmian frowned.

“A-Xian stayed behind to hold off the demi-Xuanwu that was in the cave so the rest of us could get out through a route in the water. The wens had escaped and left us disciples to die,” Jiang Wanyin said, “but A-Xian nearly got killed and Wangji decided to stay with him. A-Xian then ensured mine and Jin Zixuan’s escape so we could return to our sects and get help.

Presumably, some time during the sprawl, the hole had been blocked, trapping WangJi and A-Xian inside, even after they killed the damn thing,”

“Xuanwu? Like the divine beast?” Nie MingJue exclaimed.

“A mimic of it,” Wei WuXian said and then motioned back to the projection which shifted.

‘I’ve never known anybody like you,’

The scene is far further in the future now, Wei WuXian already in the robes of the YiLing Pathriarch and Chenqing at his side. He is holding A-Yuan near as Lan WangJi stands in front of him. They are on a weakly traveled path, behind Wei WuXian, the flicker of red wards shimmer.

“What can I do? Give up the people on this mountain?” Wei WuXian was saying, “I can’t do that,”

He sighs, “Can anybody give me a nice option where I can protect the people I want to protect and not walk this path?”

A silence falls between them. They both know.

No such option exists.

“Why don’t you use your sword, again?” Jin ZiXuan asked, confused, “Did we ever get an explanation for that?”

“No, why don’t you use your sword, Young Master Wei?” Nie MingJue asked.

The people of the future glance at Wei WuXian who stares silently. He then smiles, “I didn’t feel like it,”

Lan WangJi and Jiang Wanyin give him a look.

‘It’s all good’

“Wei Ying,”

Lan WangJi walks into a building, that they soon recognize as the jingshi, and walks to where Wei WuXian was sitting and scribbling something. Lan WangJi calls again, “Wei Ying, dinner,”

“In a minute,”

Lan WangJi sighs fondly, placing the trays down—

“Emperor’s Smile!!” Wei Ying spots, “Lan Zhan! You brought wine!”

Lan Zhan’s eyebrow twitches.

“Eh?” Jiang Wanyin said, before remembering, “Ah, I forgot that WangJi having a stash of wine is not a thing yet,”

“A stash of *what* ?” Lan Qiren spits.

Lan Xichen smiles awkwardly as Nie MingJue throws his head back in laughter. Nie Huaisang explodes, “Lan-Xiong!!! We’re friends now,”

Lan Zhan glares at Nie Huaisang, who only grins wider.

'I've never dreamed of nobody like you,'

Lan WangJi walks forward, wrapping his arms around Wei WuXian from behind. He then leans down, placing a soft peck on the male's forehead and cheek, "My heart, come eat dinner,"

"Mm...I have to get this right--"

"Wei Ying has to rest," Lan WangJi gently used his fingers to force Wei WuXian to look up at him, "This can wait,"

"But--"

"A-Ying,"

Wei WuXian huffs, placing the brush down in surrender. He looks at Lan WangJi with a fond smile, "Fine...the great Hanguang Jun has won over the YiLing Patriarch once more,"

"Hm...Hanguang Jun wishes the YiLing Patriarch eat his dinner before it gets cold," Lan WangJi played along, before shifting and scooping Wei WuXian off the chair.

The young man squeals in shock, before laughing happily and hugging Lan WangJi's neck, placing a kiss on his cheek, "Mn! He will!"

Jiang Cheng's eyebrow twitches, "I'm starting to think the shameless one is Second Young Master Lan,"

“That’s because it is!” Wei WuXian says, “I am say shameless things, but Lan Zhan actually *does* them,”

‘And I’ve heard of a love that comes once in a lifetime,’

The scene is just Wei WuXian. He is dressed in black and red, eyes curved into crescents as he throws his head back and laughs. His eyes shift, almost to stare at the viewers himself. The smile grows wider and he waves his hand, “Lan Zhan!!”

“ ... ”

“Is this how you see me?” Wei WuXian whispers.

Lan WangJi pets his hair, “Mn,”

“Why am I so...” Wei Ying trails off.

“Wei Ying is good,” Lan WangJi says as if that explains everything.

“Did you hear what Hanguang Jun just sang?” Ouyang Zizhen is very, very, close to full on sobbing.

Lan WangJi enters the picture, Wei WuXian running forward and jumping on the older, who catches him with ease. Wei WuXian giggles joyfully, unwrapping his legs and staring up. The two of them are staring at each other with different expressions of love, and yet the love is just as strong in either gaze.

‘And I’m pretty sure you are that love of mine,’

Wei Ying exhales at such a claim from the lyrics. Jiang Fengmian smiles, almost sadly. He then looks at Lan Qiren, “Qiren...take care of A-Xian,”

Lan Qiren exhales. He can hear the love, the raw emotions in the song. And he has the evidence of his nephew’s happiness in front of him.

And yet he doubts.

‘Cause I’m in a field of dandelions,’

The scene grows to show Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian surrounded by small bunnies. Wei Wuxian was laying his head in Lan Wangji’s lap as the older stroked his hair with one hand and fed a few bunnies with his other. Wei Wuxian was giggling and stroking the bunnies as they climbed on top of him.

There was no talking, they didn’t need talking.

This was domestic, this was them.

“Lan Zhan! You have so many bunnies!” Wei Ying exclaimed, “How cute!”

He freezes after realizing what he said, face turning the color of his robes within seconds. Lan Zhan is staring at him, “Cute?”

“T-The bunnies! Bun-bunnies are cute! Obviously! I was talking about the bunnies!” Wei Ying turned away, his face red.

Jiang Yanli giggles, already thinking of what sort of dishes should be given at the wedding.

‘Wishing on every one that you'd be mine,’

The scene shifts to show Lan WangJi standing behind Wei WuXian in the jingshi, the older covering the demonic cultivator’s eyes. Wei WuXian teases, “What is going on?”

“Surprise,”

“You give me a surprise almost everyday Lan Zhan!”

“Not everyday,”

“No, you’re right, you give me something else everyday,”

Jiang Wanyin facepalmed loudly.

The juniors flush deeply, Jin Ling suddenly fretting, “Oh no, this thing isn’t going to show *that* is it?”

“I’ve been traumatized enough,” Lan JingYi fake cried.

“It was one time,” Wei WuXian stares at them.

The four of them stare at Wei WuXian and the senior corrects, “Okay it was a few times, but it wasn’t more than five!”

“That’s still too many times!” Ouyang Zizhen defended.

“What are you guys—”

“SHHH!!!” Jin Ling shushed Jiang Cheng, “No. It’s better if you stay spared,”

Lan WangJi on the screen breathes deeply for a moment. He then keeps one hand covering Wei WuXian’s eyes and the other opens the back door.

“Ah? Are we going outside?” Wei WuXian asks.

“Mn,”

Lan WangJi is careful to guide Wei WuXian to the back deck, standing in the center. He then says, “You can open your eyes,”

He removes his hand and Wei WuXian eyes softly open. They widen almost immediately after, lips parting in shock, “What— this is—”

“Oh! Is this the first time A-Ying saw the area?” Wen Qing clarifies.

“Mhm,”

‘Mine’

“For Wei Ying...” Lan WangJi asys, almost unsurely.

“Lan Zhan...this— is that a lotus pond? Lan Zhan!” He turns around, “Lan Zhan! Did you make a lotus pond?!”

“Mn,”

Wei WuXian stares at him, before almost sending them both falling when he suddenly throws himself onto the white-robed male. Wei WuXian, hugs tightly, “I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you!”

Lan WangJi blinks and then huffs, “Love Wei Ying too,”

Wei Ying smiles slightly. He speaks before he processes, “Thank you,”

Lan Zhan doesn’t look at him, both of them are staring at the screen. He responds, “I…have not done anything,”

“No,” Wei Ying agrees, “But still,”

‘And I see forever in your eyes’

Wei WuXian shudders slightly at the lyrics. He leans into Lan WangJi, feeling the grounding feeling of an arm around his waist. His head rests on his husband’s shoulder, mouth whispering for just Lan WangJi to hear, “I missed you,”

Lan WangJi glances at him, “I missed you too,”

In front of them, their projected versions are in the same position, just standing up. They are staring out ahead of them, the view showcasing the world, lights of a few villages speckle on the ground. Above, the moon and stars watch over them.

‘I feel okay when I see you smile,’

The projection turns to show the two of them in a boat, rowing through a few stocks of Lotus seeds. They're talking about something and the boat is rocking with their movements.

Jiang Cheng's eyebrow twitches, "If either of you don't stop you'll both—"

He is cut off by the two on the screen moving forward at the exact same time, sending them both toppling into the water as the boat tips.

"....fall,"

Wei Ying giggles, before descending into laughter at the scene.

It fades slowly as he is presented the sight of Lan WangJi resurfacing, soaked in water. And yet, he looks *ethereal* .

Lan Zhan is no better, forced to face to sight of Wei WuXian laughing while drenched, his arms coming up to hug his older self over the shoulders.

"Are you alright?" Lan WangJi asks, though he seems to know the answer.

"I've fallen into rivers a million times! Are *you* alright?" Wei WuXian humors.

"Mn,"

'Smile'

The scene shifts and they are on one of the piers. There's multiple people on the pier. The juniors are currently in the water. Wei WuXian has already been in the water, the soaked state of his hair any indignation.

“You know what—” Jiang Wanyin’s voice echoes and they all watch shocked as Lan WangJi is very abruptly thrown into the water.

Wei WuXian jumps, before staring at where Lan WangJi resurfaced a look of pure confusion on his face. Quickly, the Wei is laughing into the air, before being cut off by Jiang Wanyin kicking him into the water.

“You never explained why that happened,” Lan WangJi says.

“I don’t need an explanation,” Jiang Wanyin replies coolly.

Wei WuXian softly clears his throat and Lan WangJi bites back a retort.

‘Wishing on dandelions all of the time’

The scene shifts back to Gusu and the jingshi. They are shown Wei WuXian slumped onto the bed, the covers covering most of his body. Lan WangJi walks towards the bed, sitting on the edge and leaning over to gently run a soothing hand through the black hair. His fingers glow softly with blue spiritual energy as he speaks, “A-Ying, time to get up,”

“Mmph...” Wei WuXian groans, “Give me...five minutes...”

Lan WangJi lets out a huff, lips curling into a smile. He leans over kissing his husband on the head, “There’s a discussion conference today, my love,”

Wei WuXian groans louder, burying himself deeper. Lan WangJi pulls the covers away, “A-Ying...”

‘Praying to God that one day you’ll be mine’

“Fuck the discussion conference,” Wei WuXian grumbles cracking his eyes open. He then yawns, letting Lan WangJi dig him from under the blankets. The moment he is free, he latches onto the second jade, Lan WangJi sighing at his antics.

“Knew it,” Jiang Cheng deadpanned, “I would have been impressed if WuXian could manage the Lan sleeping schedule,”

“Jiang Cheng!” Wei Ying pouted, “Leave my sleeping schedule alone!”

‘Wishing on dandelions all of the time,’

The projection is suddenly draped in red and gold. The familiar view of the GusuLan Elegance Hall reins attention, but the colors were out of place. Despite it, the hall is filled with the great sects and a few minor ones. In the center of the hall, Jiang Wanyin, a Jin Ling, Lan Xichen, and Lan Qiren sit around a table. Just steps below them, four ancestry tablets are laid with two bodies in red bowing.

Ouyang Zizhen screamed.

“Zizhen...my ears...” Lan SiZhui groaned.

“Is this...” Yu ZiYuan speaks, but trails off.

“Oh, those robes are lovely,” Madam Jin praises.

“Thank you,” Wei WuXian smiles, “Our robes were designed by the juniors,”

‘All of the time’

Time has passed in the scene, Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian now standing upright. Lan WangJi holds out a hand, smiling lovingly, despite the thin veil over Wei WuXian’s head. Wei WuXian happily takes hold of Lan WangJi’s hands, giggling when the older places a gentle kiss on the knuckles, “Welcome to Gusu, my love,”

“...I’m married...” Wei Ying whispers to himself, “...I’m really married,”

He smiles, a gentle and sincere thing. One of relief and joy, *‘I’m married! Really married! To someone that loves me and I...love him too...’*

The scene shifts from the wedding to show Wei WuXian, already in his new body, standing in front of a large crowd of cultivators. His eyes are staring at them, dim and tired.

“Down with the YiLing Patriarch!”

“...this is?” Nie Huaisang frowns.

“The second siege of the burial mounds,” Grandmaster Lan exhaled, tiredly, “It happened right after the world found out A-Xian had returned to the world. He and WangJi were heading towards YiLing, so we followed. The juniors had been trapped up there until the two of them, plus Wen Qionglin found them,”

Wei Ying wilted at the words. They had just found out about him and they were eager to get rid of him again.

‘I think that you are the one for me’

“Oh, it’s my turn,” Wei WuXian muttered as his voice sang out.

Wei WuXian on the screen looked shocked as a flash of white cut in front of him. Lan WangJi stood firmly in front of him, facing the cultivation world without wavering.

“Everyone, please calm down. Wei Ying is not to be blamed,”

A cultivator from the crowd called out, “Hanguang Jun! What’s happened to you? You are praised to be righteous and his own enemy! Just what sort of curse did Wei WuXian place on you?”

“WangJi,” Lan Qiren called from the crowd, “Come here,”

Lan WangJi looked at his uncle once, before lowering his eyes and staying in place.

“Stupid fuddy-duddy,” Wei Ying and Wei WuXian both spit.

“Will protect Wei Ying,” Lan WangJi states.

“Wei Ying did nothing wrong,” Lan Zhan agrees.

The room happily watches the interaction.

Lan Qiren frowns at the display of his nephew’s disobedience on the screen.

‘Cause it gets so hard to breathe’

Wei WuXian slid open a door, his hair left completely open and only a pair of night robes and a thin outer robe on his figure. The sky above is dark, but he walks forward, rubbing his eyes to awaken himself.

“Wei Ying,” Lan WangJi calls out, turning around.

He was dressed in a similar state. It was clear now that the two had awoken from their sleep. Wei WuXian hummed, walking forward and wrapping his arms around the taller’s waist.

“Did I wake you?”

“Nuh-uh,” Wei WuXian mumbled, “Cold,”

Lan WangJi huffed a quite laugh, “Then why did you get up?”

“Noticed you were missing...” Wei WuXian glanced up, “Everthing okay?”

“Mn,”

“Lan Zhan...”

“Yes?”

“I’m here,”

Lan WangJi's eyes widen, before softening. He tightens his grip, expression shifting to sadness, "You are..."

"A-Xian, you look so happy," Jiang Yanli can't help but comment.

Wei Ying shifts, the words sending conflicting emotions through his mind. He did look happy. Comfortable...safe.

He looked like he belonged.

'When you're looking at me'

Wei WuXian was seated in a tree, staring down with a grin. Lan WangJi stood below, watching him and listening as Wei WuXian said, "Back then, it seemed so high! But back in it now, its not that far of a fall!"

"Oh hey!" Wei Ying recongized the place insntantly, "It's Lotus Pier! This was the tree I fell out and almost broke my leg on!"

"What?" Jiang Fengmian and Yu ZiYuan both chorus.

"Ah..." Wei Ying winced.

"I took care of him and A-Cheng that night, A-Die, A-Niang. Don't worry," Jiang Yanli laughed softly.

"Wei Ying," Lan WangJi called, "Come down,"

Wei WuXian blinked softly, staring down at Lan WangJi.

If he fell...would he catch him?

'I've never felt so alive and free'

Wei WuXian tilts off the branch, falling downwards.

Startled screams call out for the boy, caught off guard by the sight of him just throwing himself off the branch.

“Wei Ying!” Lan WangJi calls, moving forward and extending his arms up.

Gracefully, he catches the younger, Wei WuXian's arms wrapping around Lan WangJi's neck tightly, while the jade's hands sat around his waist. Lan WangJi looked surprised when Wei WuXian tightened the grip, burying his head closer and whispering, “Lan Zhan...you caught me...”

Lan WangJi tightened his grip in return, promising, “I will always catch you,”

“Look!” Jiang Wanyin pointed out, “How is this the scene that I see and then when I comment on your relationship, you have the gall to go, *‘Lan Zhan and I are just friends!’*”

“I didn't know he liked me!!!” Wei WuXian defended.

“YOU'RE HUGGING LIKE LOVERS!!!”

“SO?!”

Jiang Wanyin would have tackled him if Lan WangJi didn't give him a look over Wei WuXian's shoulder.

'When you're looking at me'

Wei WuXian was humming a tune, Chenqing twirling in his fingers as he walked up the white pebbled path towards the jingshi. He opened the door and walked inside, calling out, "Lan Zhan! Are you here?"

"Mn," a soft call echoed and Wei WuXian grinned walking inside.

They were graced with the sight of Lan WangJi seated at a table, a multitude of papers and scrolls opened around him. His eyes were narrowed in focus and concentration as he was writing something down on a piece of parchment.

Wei WuXian blinked at the sight, before walking behind him and hugging him. Lan WangJi turned and placed a kiss on the younger's lip, mumbling, "Welcome home, Airen,"

Wei WuXian went still.

Wei Ying choked.

"A-Ying?" Wen Qing called out, worried, "Are you alright?"

Lan Zhan turned to him as well, eyebrows furrowed.

Wei Ying just nodded, "Yeah, i'm fine,"

His mind was hooked on that word.

home.

He had a home once, with his parents. He tried to refer to Lotus Pier as home, but the word never stuck. It wasn't home. He loved it there, yes. He loved the people there. But it had never been a home.

“Senior Wei!” Lan Jingyi exclaimed worriedly, watching the screen.

‘I’ve never felt so happy’

Wei WuXian had tears rolling down his cheeks. He sniffled suddenly, and Lan WangJi dropped the brush, alarmed. He turned fully, finding his husband crying. Immediately, the papers are forgotten and Lan WangJi turns, grabbing Wei WuXian and pulling him closer to his lap, one hand reaching up to cup one side of the younger’s face, “A-Ying?”

“No...I...” Wei WuXian sniffled, before letting out a weak laugh.

He moved forward, leaning his forehead against Lan WangJi’s, giving a loving smile through the tears, “ *I’m home,*”

“Stop being so cute!!!” Nie Huaisang complained, “I don’t have enough tears for this!”

Nie MingJue rolled his eyes, though even he could not deny the touchingness of the couple.

‘And I’ve heard of a love that comes once in a lifetime’

This time, the projection shows only Lan WangJi. He is sitting in the grass amongst the bunnies, feeding them carefully and giving them soft scratches near their ears. His amber eyes are soft when they look up, towards the audience, a smile gracing his features.

Lan Zhan tilts his head at the display. Does...does he look like this?

Lan Xichen's heart clenched, exhaling softly. The sight is his brother, yet it is also a sight of someone who can truly see his didi.

He speaks gently, "I believe, we are seeing WangJi as how Young Master Wei sees him. And the other way for Young Master Wei,"

"That makes sense," Madam Jin nodded, "It would explain why we can all understand Second Young Master Lan's expression better than before,"

Lan WangJi leans closer to his husband, the younger tilting his head up to share a soft kiss.

'And I'm pretty sure that you are that love of mine'

Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi are sitting down, somewhere where the light is limited. There is a faint red line around Wei WuXian's neck that sparks some concern, but they do not ask as Wei WuXian speaks, "Lan Zhan, look at me,"

"Oh..." Wei WuXian whispers, "This is..."

"Sh," Lan WangJi smiles.

After Lan WangJi turns, Wei WuXian sighs, looking serious, yet also ashamed, "My memory is truly awful. I can't remember a lot of things that happened in the past..."

including that time at Nightless City and all that happened in those days. I really cannot remember a single thing!”

Lan WangJi exhales, almost as if in shock.

“Nightless city? Are you speaking of when he protected you?” Jin ZiXuan asks.

“Mhm,”

A solemn atmosphere dawns on the room.

“Ah...” Jiang Cheng mutters, “Then, Second Young Master Lan must have assumed you had already known of his feelings when you came back? Or that when you were telling him to get lost, it was...rejection,”

“Wah, Jiang Cheng. I didn’t know you were so smart,” Wei WuXian jokes.

“Shut up!!!” Jiang Cheng flushed.

“But–” Wei WuXian exclaims, “But– from now onwards, everything that you say to me, everything you do to me...I’ll remember it all, I won’t forget a single thing.”

Lan WangJi expression breaks as if the weight of the words are beginning to hit him.

‘Cause I’m in a field of dandelions’

“You’re really great, I like you,” Wei WuXian confessed, “Or in other words–I fancy you, love you, want you, can’t bear to be from you, it cannot be anyone but you!”

He looks up speaking every worry from his heart, “I want to nighthunt with you for the rest of my life, be with you everyday!”

Lan Zhan exhales from the confession. He knows, disntantly, it’s not for *him* . But the words make his heart race nonetheless. He glances to the side to see Wei Ying lightly blushing but his eyes staring at the scene with rapt attent and a soft smile on his lips.

Lan Zhan wonders, briefly, if maybe...maybe...they could make this work.

‘Wishing on every one that you'd be mine,’

The scene seemed to have jumped forward because Lan WangJi is hugging Wei WuXian tightly, eyes closed as a single tear lays on his cheek. He is trembling slightly, repeating, “Like you...”

Wei WuXian grips him tighter, “Yes!”

“Love you, fancy you...”

“Yes!”

“Can’t bear be without you...don’t want anyone else but you...”

“YES!”

‘Mine’

Wei Ying wants this.

He wants this promise, this...home.

'We're being given a chance to fix it, right? So...so...maybe, maybe I can just keep this? Just this one thing...'

"Zewu Jun," Jiang Yanli raises her eyes, "I know tradition is important, but I'd give my blessing to A-Xian so he can marry before me,"

"Wh- Shijie?!" Wei Ying exclaimed, his blush darkening.

"Wangji would have my blessing as well," Lan Xichen smiled, "And please, Zewu Jun is too formal. Xichen is fine,"

"Brother!"

"Then you may call me Yanli," Jiang Yanli ignores the couple, "By the end of this, we'll all be friends anyway,"

Jiang Fengmian chuckles, glancing at Lan Qiren. He half expects to see a frown, but is pleasantly surprised to see a small smile.

'And I see forever in your eyes'

Wei WuXian sits atop of a donkey, Lan Wangji holding the reins as they walk. Wei WuXian is twirling Chenqing around, leaning down, "It has a name? What is it?"

Lan Wangji sighed, "WangXian,"

“...”

“Wang...Xian?” A few people repeat.

“WangXian?” Wei WuXian repeats on the screen eyes widening for a moment.

“Mn,”

Wei WuXian stares at his beloved for a moment, before giggling, “WangXian! How nice!! It’s perfect!”

“What’s WangXian?” Nie MingJue asks.

Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian share a quick glance. Wei WuXian then smiles, amused at whatever he finds on his husband’s face. The demonic cultivator tells them, “A secret between us...”

‘I feel okay when I see you smile,’

“Come, come!” Wei WuXian was running through the halls of Lotus Pier, pulling Lan WangJi along, “A-Cheng kept my room and he even salvaged some of my stuff so it’s almost the exact same. I always wanted you to see my room!”

Lan WangJi doesn’t put up as fight as he is dragged into a room—

“That’s not your room,” Jiang Cheng deadpans, “It’s not messy enough,”

“You know what,” Wei Ying glares, offended, “Fuck you, Jiang Cheng,”

Jiang Cheng shrugs, “I’m right though,”

Jiang Yanli chastises, “Boys…”

‘Smile’

“Ta-da!!” Wei WuXian spins, extending his arm out, “This is my haven in Lotus Pier! Now it’s our haven!”

Lan WangJi hummed, pulling Wei WuXian into a gentle kiss, “I love it,”

“Do you really?” Wei WuXian laughed.

“Mn, it’s Wei Ying,”

“Ahahaha! Lan Zhan! My heart! I’ve told you to warn before saying romantic things!!”

Lan Zhan blinks and then looks at Wei Ying, “You said the same thing earlier,”

Wei Ying flushed, “Shut up!!”

Jiang Wanyin smirked, *‘Zewu Jun played matchmaker in our last life, I’m going to play matchmaker now,’*

‘Wishing on dandelions all of the time’

They are gifted with the sight that faintly resembles the jingshi, except the inside has been decorated in reds and gold. On the bed a veiled figure in red sits, humming softly, though the tune is incomprehensible over the music being played.

The door opens and the group is gifted the sight of Lan WangJi, also in red walking inside the jingshi. Wei WuXian perks, laughing slightly, “You finally managed to escape?”

“Mn...” Lan WangJi agreed walking near the bed.

“Good! Then come and lift this! I want to see you properly!”

Lan WangJi reached forward, an almost undetectable tremble in his movements. Gently, he grips the viel and pulls it upwards and the group gasps at the appearance of Wei WuXian.

There is a rouge on his lips and a lighter tone around his eyes, with a hint of purple rouge blending into it at the corners. His hair is held back by a large gold headpiece, except for a few bangs that were too short to clip away.

“A-Xian, you’re beautiful!!!” Jiang Yanli praises.

“Wei-Xiong! How are you possibly this good looking in two bodies?!” Nie Huaisang cries.

Wei Ying was flushed in embarrassment. His entire face went deep red when Lan Zhan mumbled, “Wei Ying is pretty,”

‘Praying to God that one day you'll be mine’

Lan WangJi exhaled, staring down at his now-husband with an almost entranced look. Wei WuXian giggles rising to his feet so he could loop his arms around the taller.

“You’re already handsome, but I think this is my favorite look,” Wei WuXian grinned.

It was true. Lan WangJi already looked like a deity in his regular whites, but the red was another world. The white forehead ribbon had been swapped for a red wedding ribbon, the blue clouds gold. Similarly to the headpiece in Wei WuXian’s hair, Lan WangJi wore one as well. There was a soft shade of rouge on his face, but only around his eyes and a lighter shade to Wei WuXian’s on his lips.

The smile on the jade’s face was just an extra touch of elegance, “Wei Ying looks handsome too,”

Lan Qiren’s eyes softened. He wants what’s best for his nephews, the two children he tried to raise. He was not their parents, he knew his brother could do better if not imprisoned away, knows his brother tries to squeeze information of the sons he’d met only a handful of times. Lan Qiren has never wanted the life his fate has given him, but he has tried. He never wished for either of them to suffer like his brother...

They suffered, both of them.

Maybe not like his brother, but Lan Qiren saw similarities. He also sees the undeniable ache and fury caused by CangSe Sanren in Wei WuXian.

Never hold grudges. Do not judge before evidence. Do not yell. Do not speak ill of others.

Lan Qiren could’ve done better. He will talk with with his elder self the next time he could. He wants to know if he had blessed this union. A union he could see made his dear nephew happier than ever. That made his nephew feel.

Something Lan Qiren that had worried since Lan WangJi had lost his mother.

He inhales and turns towards his nephew, “WangJi, you’ve grown well,”

Lan Zhan’s eyes widen for a brief moment, turning to his uncle. Lan Zhan then bows his head, responding almost breathlessly, “Thank you...”

‘Wishing on dandelions all of the time,’

The two gazed at one another soft looks and gentle smiles on both their faces.

“Hi,” Wei WuXian smiled dumbly.

“Hello,” Lan WangJi’s smile somehow became sweeter.

Wei WuXian tilted his head up and Lan WangJi bent down to softly kiss the younger. It was a gentle kiss, filled with affection and love. When they parted, Lan WangJi kept his eyes closed, opening them slowly and staring at Wei WuXian.

“...Wei Ying,”

“I’m here,” Wei WuXian whispered, “I’m here, laogong,”

Lan WangJi inhaled sharply. He repeated, “Laogong...”

Wei WuXian giggled, before falling into cackles, “Yes! My husband! And I’m yours! Forever!”

Lan WangJi stared at the laughing man in his arms.

“Oh dear, you’re gone,” Wen Qing smirked.

Lan Zhan didn’t even glare at her, only proving the point.

‘All of the time’

“Forever,”

“...this thing isn’t going to show everything, right?” Grandmaster Lan suddenly sweatdropped.

Lan SiZhui was flushed, “Baba...A-Die...this is your *wedding night* ,”

And just the reminder made everyone abruptly tense and flush.

Wei WuXian was fully prepared to block out the screen and set up a noise block around everyone should it come down to it.

Luckily, that was not needed.

The projection shifted with the tempo of the music, revealing the twin jades of Lan standing on the steps of Koi Tower. They are staring out towards the scenery, well, Lan WangJi was. Lan Xichen was looking at his brother, a soft look of concern on his expression.

***‘Dandelion, into the wind you go’* Lan WangJi’s voice sang once again, the tone soft and slightly different compared to before.**

“Brother,” Lan WangJi speaks, “I wish to bring a person back to Cloud Recesses,”

“Bring a person to Cloud Recesses?”

“Bring him back. And hide him,” Lan WangJi whispered.

Lan Zhan frowned. He looked at his older self, “You said I would not—”

“Lan Zhan,” Wei Wuxian stopped him, “You did not. I have always been free to come and go,”

Wei Ying is confused, but he doesn’t ask, sensing the tension.

‘Won't you let my darling know?’

Lan Xichen stares at his brother for a moment. He says, “...he may not be willing,”

Lan WangJi looked down, saying nothing.

“Why didn’t you go back to Gusu?” Jin Zixuan asked.

“I thought...” Wei WuXian places a comforting hand on his husband’s knee, looking at the younger versions of the Lans, “I thought it was to imprison me,”

All the Lans flinched, except for the two juniors, who did not have a clue to what was being referred to. Lan WangJi looked down, “It’s good he didn’t agree...the sect wouldn’t have helped,”

“What...” Lan Xichen frowned, “Surely—”

“Brother,” Lan Wangji interrupts, “What you know now...no one bothered to learn before. My word is folly for I am a Lan in love,”

Lan Xichen pales slightly. Surely he couldn't have failed his brother this bad. Surely, he must've...

“You believe Young Master Wei...while I, believe Jin Guangyao,”

Lan Xichen looks down. The elder version of his brother is correct. He doesn't understand his future self's choices. But at the same time...if he had seen just a demonic cultivator and by the few arguments that they had snuck peaks at, Lan Xichen would have easily assumed chasing after Wei Wuxian would only cause his brother pain.

He had never wondered why his mother killed his father's teacher. He wonders if he had done a similar thing to Jin Guangyao. He refused to believe the boy who had saved him would lie to him and commit such crimes when the obvious “villain” was right there.

‘Dandelion, into the wind you go’ Wei Wuxian sings out now, the scene shifting to show Wei Wuxian in his old body sitting in front of Jiang Yanli in the Yunmeng Jiang ancestral hall.

The young boy has his hands over Jiang Yanli's, the two pairs resting on the maiden's knee. She is smiling fondly at him as Wei Wuxian looks shy, “Ah...right, Shijie...I have a question I've been meaning to ask.”

“Then ask,” Jiang Yanli wipes her eye slightly.

Hesitantly, he starts, “Why would someone like another person?”

He looks shy as he adds, “I mean that sort of like,”

Jiang Yanli thinks before smiling mysteriously, “Why suddenly ask me this? Is there someone in your heart?”

Wei WuXian laughs, nervously, “No, no, no, shijie! I don’t like anyone—”

“Bullshit,” A decent chunk of people say.

Wei Ying squeaks in disbelief.

“—no need to like another like that,”

‘Won’t you let my darling know that?’

He adds after staring at his sister’s amusement.

“After all, isn’t that like haltering you own neck?”

Wei WuXian suddenly exhales violently, “Lan Zhan. I think I can predict the future,”

His husband, knowing what he means, has the audacity to give an amused smile, “Mn. Wei Ying is very talented,”

“That’s not—Lan Zhan!!”

Jiang Yanli laughs softly. She reaches forward, brushing her finger down her brother's nose, "Three years is too old. XianXian is one,"

Wei WuXian giggles before pouting, "No! I'm three!"

Wei Ying laughs, delightful to watch a familiar scene. Jiang Yanli's heart softens and she smiles, "Of course, Xianxian is too smart to be one,"

Wei Ying lets out a happy giggle, nodding, "Mhm! XianXian is only three!"

The others around the room can't help but laugh or smile at the display.

The music picks up pace once more.

***'I'm in a field of dandelions'* Wei WuXian's and Lan WangJi's voices mix together, tones of love and affection breaking through the lyrics.**

They are graced with the familiar rooftops of Gusu, moon and stars watching over the two teenagers in purple in white, dancing across the rooftops. One with a stoic face, the other with a beautiful smile.

'Wishing on every one that you'd be mine,'

The rooftop meeting is soon blending with the mirror of an older version of the two—Wei WuXian in his new body—chasing one another across the rooftops of a town, smiles on both their faces as they are once again dancing under the gaze of the night sky.

"Y-you both a-are very g-graceful," Wen Ning smiles.

Lan Zhan bows his head, while Wei Ying grins shyly, “Aw, thank you, A-Ning!”

‘Mine’

Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi are seated on a rooftop, the former sitting down and the latter standing. Wei WuXian looks up, “Hey, Lan Zhan?”

Lan WangJi glances down at him, curious. Wei WuXian grins, “I’ll come to Gusu with you,”

Lan Qiren clears his throat, “Wei WuXian, do you know how to play the dizi?”

“Huh?” Wei Ying blinks, “Uh- I mean, yes? When I learned music, I picked a dizi,”

“If you wish, you can spend some time in Gusu to further your music cultivation,”

Wei Ying is gaping at Lan Qiren, who is not looking at him.

Lan WangJi exhales softly, a feeling of relief and hope spreading through him. Yes, maybe the torment of reliving all of the painful memories will be worth it.

“I- I’d be honored...” Wei Ying blinks, responding almost in a daze, eyes shifting to Jiang Cheng, asking his brother silently, *‘What the fuck?’*

Jiang Cheng just rolls his eyes, fingers gripping his arms tightly where they were crossed over his chest. He waits for his father to say something, but hears nothing.

‘Typical,’ he thinks bitterly, *‘Letting him do whatever he wants to do without fault,’*

His mother would– the moment the thought even hits him, guilt floods him. Jiang Cheng mentally hits himself. How could he forget *that*?

Jiang Yanli glances at Jiang Cheng beside her, heart aching. She'd need to explain, no she could try to, but for a young boy deprived of so much, he is similar to Wei Ying in that sense. They both cling to affection, they protect that affection, they protect those they care about.

The difference was that her A-Xian saw himself as dispensable, replaceable, something that can be thrown aside. He did not see his worth.

Jiang Cheng knew his strength, knew of a fate promised to him, grew up where his worth was measure in lavishes, yet also was ignored by yells and silence.

They were two sides of the same blade.

‘And I see forever in your eyes’

“I did it!!!” Wei WuXian’s exclaimed as the scene shows him and Lan WangJi, their respective swords in their hands, as they stand opposite to each other.

Wei WuXian is panting, but the joy is undeniable, “I did it! Lan Zhan! I blocked all of them!!”

Lan Wangji has look of pride on his face, “Mn, I saw,”

“Huh?” Jiang Fengmian frowned, “As in blocked the strikes?”

“Why are you so happy about something so trivial?” Nie MingJue asks.

Wei WuXian inhales softly, “Mo XuanYu’s core...when I returned. Its insignificant to be ignored. Moreover, I hadn’t been able to use my sword in a very long time,”

Everyone—except Wen Qing, who merely frowned sadly, understanding the words better than the rest—of the past paled. Everyone, no matter what rumors they have heard, are very aware of Wei Ying’s cultivation. A prodigy, and a talent. It was obvious enough he enjoyed cultivating, took pride in it. To suddenly be denied of that...

Wei Ying was in shock, “I...I couldn’t...what?”

Jiang Wanyin flinched.

‘I feel okay when I see you smile,’

Wei WuXian was laying down, head resting on Lan WangJi’s shoulder, eyes closed. He was deep asleep and Lan WangJi had sought to comb the black hair with one hand, as his other held a calligraphy brush. Wei WuXian shifted slightly, Lan WangJi pausing to check his husband, smiling fondly as the younger only leaned closer. Turning his head, he placed a soft kiss on Wei WuXian’s forehead, “I love you,”

“JingYi? Zizhen?” Lan SiZhui turned to his friends, worry in his tone.

The group looked over to check, only to find the Lan JingYi and Ouyang Zizhen sniffing and crying, eyes sparkling as they watching the scene. Jin Ling facepalmed beside them, “Idiots,”

“Hanguang Jun loves him so mu-much!!” Ouyang Zizhen sobbed.

Lan Xichen hid a small giggle, but the smile was present. Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi were used to their antics so they just exchanged fond looks, before turning to watch again.

‘Smile’

Wei WuXian was sitting on the bed, back leaning against the headrest. His legs were half-covered by the white blanket. His eyes were fixed on a book in his hands, clearly engrossed in whatever was written.

Lan WangJi walked over to the bed and unlike his husband who was clearly prepared for the night, the second jade was still dressed in his usual robes. Without a pause, Lan WangJi shifted to the bed, Wei WuXian glancing up. Before he could speak, his expression changed to surprise as Lan WangJi just lays down, hiding his face in the younger’s lap.

Lan Zhan flushed in embarrassment at the shameless display. He grew even more shy as he heard the coos of the room.

“Bad day?” Wei WuXian placed the book away at once, hands reaching forward and moving to remove the tight headpiece, twisting it out of Lan WangJi’s hair with practiced ease.

A muffled, “mn,” was barely caught by the audience.

Wei WuXian smiled softly, gently undoing the forehead ribbon and releasing Lan WangJi’s hair completely. He kept the ribbon to the side for now, just running gentle glides of fingers through his husband’s hair, “You did well, A-Zhan. Time to rest for the day,”

Lan WangJi buried deeper and remained there for some time.

The words hit Lan Zhan in a way he did not know words could do.

‘Wishing on dandelions all of the time’

After some unknown time, Lan WangJi lifted his head. Wei WuXian indulged, kissing his forehead gently, praising again, “You worked very hard, my heart, I’m so proud,”

Lan WangJi exhaled shakily, “Th...” he stopped before he could finish the words, switching to, “I love you,”

“Why—”

“Too much happened in our past,” Wei WuXian answered the question, “The words of ‘Thank You’ and ‘I’m sorry’ have too much weight between us,”

“Those words. Between him and I, they are not needed,” Lan WangJi agreed.

“Love you too,” Wei WuXian had whispered. He then asked after a pause, “Do you want to talk about it?”

Lan WangJi shook his head, returning to hide away. Wei WuXian smiled hopelessly, “Alright,” Gently, he pats the top of Lan WangJi’s head, “Come on, there’s a bath ready,”

Lan WangJi didn’t move. Wei WuXian giggled, “A-Zhan, you won’t sleep well if you don’t wash up,”

Lan WangJi sighed, reluctantly pushing up. Wei WuXian watches him, fond, “Let’s go, my heart. I’ll wash your hair,”

Lan WangJi let himself be pulled through the jingshi as the scene switched once more.

Lan Xichen speaks sincerely, “Young Master Wei. Thank you for taking care of WangJi,”

Wei WuXian smiles, shaking his head, “No need to thank me,”

Lan Xichen disagrees, glancing at Wei Ying, “I will do so anyway,”

‘Praying to God that one day you’ll be mine’

The scene showed Lan WangJi and Wei WuXian both in their night robes. Wei WuXian was very clearly, half-asleep, while Lan WangJi was slightly more present. The latter had guided Wei WuXian to the bed, a towel in his hands as he stood ahead to dry the already damp hair.

Wei WuXian yawned, eyes dropping shut. The moment the towel was out of the way, Wei WuXian laid down, hitting the pillow and complaining sleepily, “Lan Zhan, stop talking to me, I’m tired,”

Lan WangJi smiled, “Alright,”

‘Wishing on dandelions all of the time,’

Wei WuXian pouted, “Lan Zhan, I said don’t talk to me. If you say something I’ll have to talk,”

Lan WangJi walked over, gently taking the covers and helping his half-asleep beloved into bed, following after ensuring the other was covered. His movements paused when Wei WuXian turned, lifting his head up and abruptly pecking his lips.

“Lan Zhan, see you tomorrow,”

Wei WuXian returned to the pillow, eyes falling completely shut and breathing leveling out as the exhaustion took over. Lan WangJi stayed still for a moment, before exhaling and his eyes softened. He leaned over, pecking his husband's nose, "Wei Ying, see you tomorrow,"

'All of the time'

Jiang Cheng stares at the scene. He can hear Nie Huaisang whining about their love again, he can hear his sister coo, Lan Qiren exhale almost fondly. He looks at Wei Ying, seeing a soft and longing look in his eyes.

Yet, the gaze shifts towards Jiang Cheng, as if detecting his look. When their eyes meet, Wei Ying gives him a smile, a fond smile yet also a shy one, as if he is embarrassed by Jiang Cheng catching him day dreaming about his future.

It is that look that Jiang Cheng realizes that no matter what, Wei Ying will not leave. Yes, he won't be physically at Jiang Cheng's side, but he won't leave. They are brothers, cousins, family. Jiang Cheng looks at his older self. A man that Jiang Cheng almost doesn't recognize.

It is someone comfortable in their skin, someone who has found a balance. A home.

Jiang Cheng wants Wei Ying to be happy. He wants to be happy too.

Wei Ying is not his to keep. But he will always be a part of Jiang Cheng.

Jiang Cheng smiles. They can be the Twin Prides of Yunmeng.

After all, even if Lan Zhan and Wei Ying married before without influence, Jiang Cheng is going to make it very clear that *this* Lan Zhan proves himself.

The music softens down to a light tone, the projection fading until it shows a snow covered town.

***'I'm in a field of dandelions'* The couple's voices are delicate, yet the strength of the emotion is just as strong as earlier.**

They are shown a small alleyway, a young child is sitting in the snow, setting down three dolls of hay in the snow and muttering, "Mama, Baba, and A-Ying,"

The two WuXians and WangJi all gasp sitting forward, expression mimics of shock—though Lan Zhan's shock is obviously a bit more hidden—alerting those around them.

"No way..." Wei WuXian whispered, "There's no way..."

"What? What's wrong?" Jiang Wanyin asked, but did not receive an answer.

The young Wei Ying looks up as the soft sounds of a rattle echo over the music. The projection stretches to show the sight of a young boy in Lan robes pause at the alley, a rattle in his hands.

Quickly, everyone is placing the pieces together.

Ouyang Zizhen gapes and a fresh stream of tears seem to burst, "You met when you were KIDS?!"

'Wishing on every one that you'd be mine,'

The boy with amber eyes that only belong to one Lan, turned to look at the young boy with silver eyes. Wei Ying, encouraged by the eye contact, couldn't help but give the young child a bright smile of greeting.

Lan Zhan is suddenly walking towards him and Wei Ying looks surprised. Everyone watches in utter shock by the reveal, unable to speak or move as Lan Zhan holds out his rattle.

Wei Ying stares at it. He looks into the gold again, confusion and hesitation. Lan Zhan speaks, “For you,”

Lan Xichen chokes. He can recognize that this is already after their mother had passed. He sees that both version of his uncle are in similar shakes of disbelief. His brother had stopped talking when their mother. He didn't speak unless absolutely necessary or if he was discussing with Lan Xichen. This development went on for a few years. He grew out of it, but even then, initiating a conversation with a stranger was difficult for Lan Zhan even now!!!

As the song begins to fade, Wei Ying's shock melts into a grateful smile. His small hands reach for the rattle. Just as he is about to reach it, the final note of the song sings and the projection fades back to the Swords Hall.

‘Mine’

“That was you...” Lan Wangji mutters, “Wei Ying, that child was you,”

Wei WuXian didn't know what to say. He opted to just turn and hug his husband tightly, shaking slightly, “Lan Zhan...Lan Zhan...”

Wei Ying inhaled slowly, before turning to look at Lan Zhan. His restraint snapped and he grabbed the older, making the boy startle and look at him. Wei Ying had a bright smile on his face, tears of happiness just barely held back, “I...I still have it,”

Lan Zhan's eyes widen, “You...kept it?”

“Of course I kept it, you fuddy-duddy!!!” Wei Ying seems furious that Lan Zhan thought he’d do anything else but keep it. He is so overwhelmed he doesn’t completely process his words before saying them, “When you’re on the streets, everything and everyone is your enemy. You do what you can to survive, you eat what you can, you sneak in where you can. Of course, people have given me things back then, food mostly. But I always hesitated to take them! Taking is dangerous, but Lan Zhan, back then, I took from *you* . You gave me a toy, Lan Zhan, I’d never had a toy. I didn’t know what to do with it, but I cherished it. I kept it with me, even when those stupid dogs were trying to kill me. Lan Zhan! How could I do anything but keep it? I had never– I couldn’t remember anything nice–”

A tear hits his cheeks and he sinks backwards from where he had moved forward with emotions, “You made me so happy that day. It was the fourth year after my parents had passed and I had stopped waiting for them...they weren’t coming back, that’s the year I finally realized,”

They are staring, everyone is staring, whether by the revelation or the confessions spilled but Wei Ying is focused solely on Lan Zhan, and the jade on him. Then, everything freezes and Wei Ying’s eyes widen, while everyone around the room gasps.

Lan Zhan’s eyes had softened, lips curling up slightly. Wei Ying is so taken by the smile that he almost misses the words, “I will give you more things,”

Wei Ying flushed, “Don’t say nice things like that without warning!!”

Lan Zhan hums, but his smile twitches slightly wider.

Lan Xichen stares at his brother, heart swelling with protection. He looks towards Jiang Yanli and Wen Qing, the two meeting his gaze knowingly. His eyes flicker to Nie MingJue, who looks up when feeling the stare. There is an understanding between the four of them.

They are going to protect them, all of them. Each of them had guardians either lost or failing in some aspect. They were the older siblings, the future of the cultivation world. They had failed in the future, each of them. They had lacked and their siblings had paid the price.

Oblivious to the thoughts of their older siblings, Wei Ying and Lan Zhan smile at one another. Their thoughts echo, a promise and a hope.

'I can have this,'

Song: Dandelions - Ruth B

Chapter End Notes

Yes. Before you ask, yes. The discussion between YZY and WY was something I rewrote a couple times. I was never completely sure how to phrase it. You can decide how you want to interpret the conversation. I know what I was thinking when I wrote it.

Also, I really, really need help. I truly do not know where to go from here.

ALSO-- if anyone knows any good songs for the NIES, JINS and WENS, then please tell me!!!

End Notes

Updates will not be frequent. I just wanted to see the response and if this was something people might be interested in the future, thanks.

Works inspired by this one

[Music Heals All Forms Of Misery](#) by [idontknowwhatimdoinghalfthetime](#)

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